Freedom camping politics and policy:
A case study of four Australian local communities

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

30 March 2017
Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Signed: [Signature] Date: 29 March 2017
Acknowledgements

This thesis was crafted with the support of many people and organisations. Special gratitude goes to my voluntary informants - from those just down the road to those on the other side of the world. Your contribution was very generous as we continued to talk, listen and learn from each “other”. Special mentions go to the Caravan Industry Association Australia (CIAA), and the Campervan and Motorhome Club Australia (CMCA) for providing endorsement to my research proposal. I trust this thesis will assist both organisations, and the members represented, towards a prosperous RVing future – from that which we know today to one we are yet to envisage.

To my colleagues at Southern Cross University, you are all amazing and I say thank you to all. I am particularly grateful for the Australian Postgraduate Award that allowed me leave full-time employment to pursue my PhD. Special thanks also to my resilient supervisors, Professor John Jenkins and Dr Pascal Scherrer: first, for your bravery in volunteering to get tangled up with me for four years (ok, nearly five years) and second, your unwavering professionalism and confidence in my chosen project.

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To my friends, thanks for giving me the space to take this journey. I know I wasn’t always available for you. To Dave, Joanne, Isabel, Rae, Murray and Diane, your friendships are treasured. To my children, Gabriella and Tobias, you were children at the beginning and now you are beautiful young adults pursuing your own university studies. I am so proud of you both. To my sisters, thanks for patiently waiting for me to leave the PhD cave. Finally, to my beautiful, valiant and pioneering mum, Heather – sheep grazier, caravan park entrepreneur and quintessential freedom camper - who 40 ago said to my dad:

‘No, he cannot go with you to the sheep sale in Lightning Ridge today, he needs to go to school’!

I dedicate this thesis to my Mum and Dad

Heather Caldicott
Still RVing

William Caldicott
1934 – 2013
Abstract

Freedom camping is a practice whereby domestic or international travellers occupy by deliberate choice a recreational vehicle (RV) as a mode of accommodation in an open space that is not bound by market-based commercial norms and camping and/or caravan park-based regulations. This thesis describes, critically analyses and explains the public-policy process concerning freedom camping in four Australian local government communities. Pragmatic and reflexive knowledge-making underpin this grounded multi-methods research. Perspectives of 41 local, state, national and international-level informants are critiqued. Their voices are interrogated against discipline specific literature including planning and policy, tourism, recreation and leisure, additional to threads of my own RVing experiences.

The thesis presents four significant findings: First, there is market failure of freedom camping supply; second, the disjunct in scales of tourism policy expose the complexity of Federalism; third, community intervention is closing freedom camping policy and practice gaps; and finally, there is no clear or sequential emergence of planning approaches and policy models for tourism, recreation and leisure studies. Four major contributions are made to the fragmented RV and tourism policy-studies literature. First, an original taxonomy of caravanning aids international understanding of the “other” in RVing. Second, conceptualising the history of freedom camping since Federation (1900) identifies four legislative periods - enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling – to reveal how camping supply and demand is shaped by societal influence. Third, the local government case study explains community engagement with freedom camping through reference to power relations, decision-making and public policy theory. Fourth, incremental amendment to an existing framework for the study of planning and policy in tourism, recreation and leisure acknowledges power as the fundamental root of policy studies. Returning power to the centre of analysis strengthens the model’s analytical power. To develop a formal theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggest to start with a substantive one. Through a model this thesis delivers such an evolution in theory though it remains firmly rooted in praxis.

The thesis calls for an integrated intergovernmental planning and policy review of caravanning legislation. Across-boundary perspectives that specifically acknowledge freedom camping are required to facilitate and modernise RV operations and planning and policy environments. Such change will aptly support private enterprise to sustainably “re-enter” and other entities to “enter” a simplified, flexible and compliance ready RV camping supply chain; one better appointed to accommodate the existing, growing, “new” and still evolving RV market demands.
List of publications


Statement from publication co-authors

Publication co-authors: Professor John Jenkins and Dr Pascal Scherrer

Rod participated during all stages of the development of the papers listed and provided an overall contribution greater than that of any co-author. He wrote the first draft of the papers and undertook all field work and data analyses underpinning the papers. He conducted the literature analysis and facilitated the participatory approaches for data collection and analysis with guidance from his supervisors.

I, John Jenkins, agree that the above descriptions of the contributions of authors to those publications that I co-authored are accurate and correct.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 29 March 2017

I, Pascal Scherrer, agree that the above descriptions of the contributions of authors to those publications that I co-authored are accurate and correct.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 29 March 2017
List of conference presentations

Caldicott, RW, Jenkins, JM & Scherrer, P 2017 "'My RV my Home": freedom camping (boondocking) in Australia - a challenging "mobility" for urban planning and policy', paper presented to Association of American Geographers: AAG Annual Meeting, 4-9 April, Boston, USA.

Caldicott, RW & Harris, A 2015, 'Trading places and parking spaces: when RVing goes DIY in Australia', paper presented to 3rd World Research Summit for Tourism and Hospitality and 1st USA-China Tourism Research Summit: Transforming Partnerships, 15-19 December, Rosen College, University of Central Florida, Orlando, USA.

Caldicott, RW & Harris, A 2015, 'Freedom camping: is it changing the face of caravanning in Australia?', in E Wilson & M Witsel (eds), Proceeding to the 25th Annual CAUTHE Conference - Rising Tides and Seachanges: Adaption and Innovation in Tourism and Hospitality (USB), 2-5 February, Southern Cross University, Gold Coast, Australia, pp. 409-413.


Caldicott, RW 2011, 'Where the bloody hell will they all go? Upward-trends and downward-spirals in Australian caravan park capacity', in N Carr & D Evans (eds), 10th Biennial ANZALS Conference: Challenging Leisure 6-8 December, Dunedin, NZ.
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>NT</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
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<td>Qld</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<td>Tas</td>
<td>Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Western Australia</td>
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## Others

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAG</td>
<td>Association of American Geographers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>Australian Broadcasting Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Advocacy Coalition Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>AITO</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Tourism Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALGA</td>
<td>Australian Local Government Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZALS</td>
<td>Australia and New Zealand Association of Leisure Scholars</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARRVCF</td>
<td>Australian Responsible Recreational Vehicle Campers Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARTN</td>
<td>Australian Regional Tourism Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASCOT</td>
<td>Australian Standing Committee on Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BDO</td>
<td>Binder Dijker Otte (International)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEST EN</td>
<td>Business Enterprises for Sustainable Travel Education Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLM</td>
<td>Bureau of Land Management (USA)</td>
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<td>BVCD</td>
<td>Bundesverband der Campingwirtschaft in Deutschland (Germany)</td>
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<td>DTV</td>
<td>Deutschland Tourist Bundesverband (Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAUTHE</td>
<td>Council of Australian Tourism and Hospitality Educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>Caravan Park and Camp Ground</td>
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<td>DIY</td>
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<td>Crown Trust</td>
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<td>DEEDDI</td>
<td>Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DILD</td>
<td>Department of Industry Lands Division (NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLG</td>
<td>Division of Local Government</td>
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Table of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DLGC</td>
<td>Department of Local Government and Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNPRSR</td>
<td>Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNRM</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources and Minerals (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP&amp;I</td>
<td>Dept. of Planning and Infrastructure (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPAW</td>
<td>Department of Parks and Wildlife (WA)</td>
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<td>DTV</td>
<td>Deutscher Tourismusverband (Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECN</td>
<td>Ethics Confirmation Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>Economic Development Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td>63 (Alpha code for year of motor vehicle release, i.e. 1963)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIFO</td>
<td>Fly In Fly Out</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNQFCAG</td>
<td>Far North Queensland Freedom Camping Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>FNQRROC</td>
<td>Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils</td>
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<tr>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Full Time Equivalent</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System,</td>
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<td>GPSC</td>
<td>General Purpose Standing Committee</td>
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<td>GRP</td>
<td>Gross Regional Product</td>
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<td>HOG</td>
<td>Harley Owners Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Institute of Australian Geographers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSR</td>
<td>Institute of Social Science Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JLGPHWG</td>
<td>Joint Local Government Planning and Housing Working Group</td>
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<td>LCC</td>
<td>Lincolnshire County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Local Environment Plan</td>
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<td>LG</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area/Authority/Association</td>
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<td>LGAT</td>
<td>Local Government Association Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member Legislative Assembly</td>
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<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCDN</td>
<td>North Coast Destination Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCP</td>
<td>National Competition Policy (AU)</td>
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<td>NMA</td>
<td>National Motorhome Association (UK)</td>
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<td>NPF</td>
<td>National Parks and Forests (Qld)</td>
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<td>NPWS</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW)</td>
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<td>National Tourism Signage Reference Group</td>
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<td>North Yorkshire County Council</td>
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<td>New Zealand</td>
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<td>New Zealand Geography Society</td>
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<td>NZMCA</td>
<td>New Zealand Motor Camping Association</td>
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<td>OEH</td>
<td>Office of Environment and Heritage (NSW)</td>
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<td>POP</td>
<td>Park Over Property</td>
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<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Private Property</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Provisional Recreation Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>RACQ</td>
<td>Royal Automobile Club Queensland</td>
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<td>RMS</td>
<td>Roads and Maritime Services (NSW)</td>
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<td>RMS</td>
<td>Department of Roads and Maritime Services (NSW)</td>
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<td>RST</td>
<td>Recreation Specialisation Theory</td>
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<td>RTO</td>
<td>Regional Tourism Organisation</td>
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<td>RV</td>
<td>Recreational Vehicle</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVFT</td>
<td>Recreational Vehicle Friendly Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RVM</td>
<td>Recreational Vehicle Manufacturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCR</td>
<td>Sveriges Campingvärddars Riksförbund (Sweden)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO</td>
<td>State Tourism Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALC</td>
<td>Tourism Area Life Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLPC</td>
<td>The Legendary Pacific Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMR</td>
<td>Department of Transport and Main Roads (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Tourism Research Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSR</td>
<td>Traveling Stock Route</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTNQ</td>
<td>Tourism Tropical North Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>USB</td>
<td>Universal Series Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCEC</td>
<td>Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCPA</td>
<td>Victorian Caravan Parks Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Visitor Information Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>VW</td>
<td>Volkswagen</td>
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<tr>
<td>WALGA</td>
<td>Western Australia Local Government Association</td>
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<td>WOM</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
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1.1 Background

On 26th October 2012 the Cairns Post published a letter from the CEO of Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ), Mr Rob Giason. In it, Giason was defending Cairns as an “RV Friendly Town” though simultaneously declaring ‘Cairns cannot give a free ride’ to freedom campers (RvVoice 2012). RvVoice editor, Chris Wilson, responded directly to Giason via personal e-mail suggesting the regional tourism industry broadly, local governments generally, and caravanning associations specifically, did not understand nor appreciate the significant changes occurring in the camping market. ‘They just don’t get it’! (RvVoice 2012; emphasis in original ). Wilson was suggesting the value of freedom campers to local communities was not recognised by the tourism association and TTNQ had ‘absolutely no idea what the average RV traveller looks for in a destination’ Additionally, Wilson commented, ‘clearly the caravan park lobby must be very thankful to have you as CEO of TTNQ’. Giason was quick to respond, again via personal e-mail to Wilson, remaining adamant in his resolve towards freedom camping, stating, ‘I am positive I “get it”, you just don’t want to “listen”’ (RvVoice 2012; emphasis in original). Wilson’s rejoinder, through RvVoice.com to his social media RVing audience was:

...well there you go, it’s all our fault. If he [Giason] is right and we are not listening then the way to solve that is ... put up a sign on the outskirts of Cairns telling us [freedom campers] to go somewhere else (RvVoice 2012; emphasis in original).

Similar debates played (and continue to play) out in local news media of south-eastern Queensland (Qld) and northern New South Wales (NSW) including commentary about freedom campers and camping impacts. On 1 January 2013, The Northern Star newspaper reported:

...many coastal areas of the Northern Rivers (NSW) are awash with rubbish and illegal campers, but spare a thought for residents just outside Byron Bay who awake to a similar sight most mornings. The beach car parks at Belongil are often clogged with illegal campers in vans, cars, tents, and flatbed trucks despite new signage erected in the middle of 2012 which expanded Byron Shire Council’s ability to take action against offenders (Gardiner 2013c).

Later in 2013, this time speaking to GoSeeAustralia’s Garth Morrison, Wilson’s agitating “RvVoice” continued – ‘...we, the consumers and the [commercial] industry, should be joining forces to find the answer rather than attacking each other’ (Morrison 2013). Wilson lamented, ‘CRVA [Caravan and Recreational Vehicle and Accommodation Association of Australia] and related RV industry groups still seem to think that the cause of the problems are the RV consumers’. Wilson
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maintained that the pressure applied by some caravan park owners to some councils to shut down alternative accommodation options was fundamentally based on the arduous rules and regulations that commercial parks were required to meet (Morrison 2013). Continuing, Wilson postured, ‘this often allows the local shire/council to take the easy way out by simply shutting down the caravan park alternative’ (Morrison 2013).

Stuart Lamont, CEO of the peak caravanning industry body Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA; and formerly CRVA), also through GoSeeAustralia, agreed that the industry was over-regulated:

These regulations are designed to protect the consumers, environment and local communities. I am not sure of too many regulations which exist to protect industry ... an analysis of the burdens associated with regulation needs to be completed (Morrison 2013).

Morrison was left to ponder on the major common challenge to both freedom camping consumers, local governments and the peak caravanning bodies, concluding:

...it is bureaucracy, in federal, state and local government regulation. Different compliance requirements from state to state and one shire/council to the next impede solving problems. Many of the [current] rules and regulations were enshrined when motor accommodation was an EH Holden [1965] towing a 14ft caravan with only a bed inside.

To further complicate matters for towed caravan or self-propelled motorhome accommodation supply, the past two decades are witness to net reduction of commercial RV sites throughout Australia (Caldicott 2011b; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a; Coventry 2015; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004) implicating ‘motor accommodation is at a watershed and ultimately something has got to give’ (Morrison 2013).

On 12 January 2014, a year after the first Northern Star article appeared, The Star again ran a story entitled: Are they free-campers or simply freeloaders? It featured Mitch and his dog, “Pixie”, who camped overnight for free at Qld beaches on the Sunshine Coast (Ditchburn 2014). The article began with a quote from the Coolum Beach Holiday Park Manager, Greg Howard, who referred to the campers as ‘freeloaders’. He complained:

I think it’s totally unfair. They’re [freedom campers] not paying and caravan parks are a big contributor to the [local] community ... we’re all entitled to make a living in the field we work in. If we catch them, we make them pay. They’re stealing.
The reference made to stealing gives rise to the term “stealth camping” intimating freedom campers were bludging off society and not paying their dues. For campers purportedly interviewed in the 2014 article, the constraints to staying at camping grounds and caravan parks were the inadequate variety of camping grounds, the exorbitant costs of caravan parks, the tightness of their spatial configurations and their lack of dog friendliness – thus Mitch and his dog, representative of an emergent segment of campers, choose to “freedom” camp in the streets, car parks and other public places including highway rest areas.

On 24 November 2015, and through a media poll - ‘Have your say on camping in Western Australia’ - the Mandurah Coastal Times received the following post:

I will not be coerced into a caravan park. If an area does not support my democratic right to choose where I park my self-contained motorhome, I will not visit. If people want to force me into particular ways of living, what next! Forced restaurants, no choice, forced supermarkets, no choice, forced shoe shops, no choice. Where will the next removal of personal choices [liberties] be! (Comment by Renae O’Neill-Dawkins, 24 November in Burgess 2015).

Individual, community and institutional perspectives on freedom camping in Australia are divided. As evidenced above, the media sensationalises this division through an emotive portrayal of the phenomenon and its influence on rural and urban communities. A rapidly growing recreational vehicle (RV) market (Australasian Leisure Management 2014, 2016) impresses upon communities its strong desire to avoid traditional caravan parks (see Appendix 1.4 – Commercial camping spaces) and the features that they present/represent (Burgess 2015; Gallard 2015; Geiger 2016; O’Neill et al. 2010). Inevitably, tensions arise as freedom camping continues to surface as a form of “street life”. Its prominence is increasingly raising the ire of commercial caravan park owners and their industry associations as spokespersons. Additionally, it upsets some members of local communities when street camping is prevalent.

There is a noteworthy disjuncture to any policy consistency across states and territories of Australia and unambiguous national policy to support local communities and local government to effectively deal with freedom camping. It remains contested; predominantly through its claim to public space. In the face of this conflict, positional power struggles surface within national caravanning communities across geographic, political and sector borders and within national, state and local community governance arenas. Notwithstanding the unrest, civic leaders, through local councils concerned for their respective leisure, recreation and tourism policy management
and regulatory environments, are being urged by state governments to deliberate the requirements of all types of RV guests to their communities – “freedom and commercial”.

1.2 Setting the problem

For the purpose of this study the term freedom camping recognises two main elements. First, there is a discrete mode of accommodation, mobile RV accommodation. This mode of deliberate choice supports a niche of camping consumers with their basic needs for a fulfilling camping experience. Freedom RV camping complements their strong sense of independence, adventure, challenge, experience, anonymity and social release outside of bureaucratic confines, or ‘having sovereignty over one’s own existence’ (Riley et al. 2010, p. 349). The physical and/or constructed bounds and economic norms of the traditional regulated caravan park environment are rejected. Second, there is a discrete activity, one grounded in the notion that RV consumers use their own private, rented or borrowed RV and occupy space predominantly in public places. This practice ‘can be understood as the power, or puissance, to create social spaces defined by one’s own aesthetic ethic; an aloof stance towards official institutions of power’ (Riley et al. 2010, p. 349; italics in original). One or more of the following characteristics may be evident at places where freedom camping occurs:

- camping may occur with or without the consent of the land owner.
- venues may or may not provide basic amenities to service the RVers.
- venues may or may not be approved for camping by the controlling authority.
- camping fees may range from ‘no fee’ through levels of donation, low, or subsided fee.
- if a fee applies, it represents a significant price differentiation from that of the market-based fee charged by commercial venues in the same region (if commercial parks exist).

Freedom camping combines a mobile form of accommodation (i.e. RV) and the “freely chosen” use thereof in a public space (i.e. camping place). Stebbins (2005) notes the key role of freedom in definitions of leisure are stated in terms of ‘choice’ and ‘freely chosen’ in other words freedom as ‘sacrosanct de rigueur elements’ (p. 349; italics in original). In light of the above this thesis adopts Caldicott et al.’s (2014b) definition of freedom camping as:

The practice whereby domestic or international travellers occupy, by deliberate choice, an RV as a mode of accommodation in an open space that is not bound by market-based commercial norms and camping and/or caravan park-based regulations (p. 419).

For purposes of differentiating freedom camping places from commercial caravanning spaces, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see also Appendix 1 - Glossary) describes caravan park as:
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A discrete landholding established, subject to the rules and regulations of the controlling authority, for the primary function of servicing the tourism industry through the active provision of short-term and/or long-term fixed or mobile accommodation space to the general public and provides powered or unpowered sites for caravans and toilet, shower and laundry facilities to guests, in exchange for an advertised market-based fee (ABS 2010, cat. no. 8635.0).

The defining elements of commercial parks are their active third-party provision and advertised market base fee. Table 1 sets out the comparative differences between commercial camping places and freedom-site camping places with dichotomies between land tenure, management, primary function, regulation, provider, amenities, services and fees.

Table 1 - Commercial and freedom comparative camping options
Source: Author

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Caravan park camping places</th>
<th>Freedom-site camping places</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discrete land holding (private or public).</td>
<td>Non-discrete (open public space).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site caretaker (manager/owner operator).</td>
<td>No on-site manager (or volunteer caretaker).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary function to service tourism.</td>
<td>Primary function not for tourism (i.e. rest area).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment regulated for accommodation.</td>
<td>Environment regulated for other purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active third-party commercial provision.</td>
<td>Consumer spawned (or community) provision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full amenities (shower/toilet/washing machine)</td>
<td>No amenities (or basic public amenities only).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hooked-up service (water, electricity, waste).</td>
<td>No services (may be public dump point access).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market-based fee.</td>
<td>No fee or low-cost fee or donation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common spaces used for freedom camping include road-side rest areas, residential streets and Crown reserves such as showgrounds and travelling stock routes (TSRs) (see Chapter 3 - Site typology). Provisions for commercial camping on public land require council approval, with limited exceptions. National Parks and State Forests both operate under their own state-based legislations and do not require the consent of the local council to develop camping grounds. Hence their low profile throughout this thesis and the debate in general. Freedom camping though is a legal activity in Australia unless it is prescribed otherwise by an authority within site or zone specific legislation, with accompanying signposting (DTESB 2014d). The prohibition is commonly symbolised (signed) as a red cross through an apex tent, though more recently other forms of RVs (Figure 1) as the humble tent, as a symbol of car-camping, gave way to the caravan post World War II (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b). The caravan today is now giving way to broader representations of RVing. RVs come in a variety of form and can be camp-kitted 4x4s and minivans, camper trailers, caravans, converted buses, motorhomes and fifth wheelers (see Appendix 1.2 – Recreational vehicle [RV] styles).
The practice of vehicle camping has been around for a long time internationally (Caldicott 2011a; Harding 2013; Kelly 1994; Kruger 2002; Peters 2003) but recent growth in Australia increases its visual presence. Freedom camping is vigorously criticised by commercial caravan park operators and their industry associations across Australia. They consider it to be a non-competitive and non-compliant accommodation practice, particularly when facilitated by local government (councils) (see Caldicott et al. 2014b). Caldicott et al. (2014b) offers an extensive discussion on the history, importance, role and position of industry and user/consumer groups and explains their influence on freedom camping politics and policy. While such policy, practice and politics occur nationally, the primary focus of this study is on NSW and Qld, notwithstanding the introduction of relevant evidence from other states. Criteria thus for camping place compliance in the State of New South Wales is prescribed by the Local Government (Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005. In Queensland, however, the Local Government Act 2009 does not specifically define or legislate around camping. Rather, it requires local governments to develop and adhere to a planning scheme for all lands they manage, specifically to create local laws to authorise the activity under Caravan Park Policy (PUX/901/102) or Secondary Use of Trust Land Policy (PUX/901/209) (DTESB 2014d).
Rallying in support of freedom camping, RV user groups like the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) and other similar caravan clubs and affiliations (i.e. Australian Caravan Club; MoTOURing) are lobbying local and state politicians to make provision for low-cost (below market norm) camping. The claim of this lobby for establishing further freedom camping venues is made on the premise of net community gain and market failure. CMCA advocate that campers bring new wealth to areas visited through increased spending, increased socialisation and volunteer opportunities. The increased visitation, they argue, promotes business growth, fosters local employment and increases the volunteer skills pool.

Some local councils and their communities embrace freedom campers. Others despise the activity. Each council has varying social, economic and political dispositions to respond to the phenomenon. As a form of low-budget travel freedom camping’s impact upon individual communities varies. Freedom camping’s overt claim on public space is now hotly contested within and across geographic and political boundaries at local, regional and state levels. Nonetheless, freedom camping is acknowledged by all parties as a timeworn travel practice. However, issues over legislative compliance, economic, environmental and social sustainability are sufficient cause for some communities and interest groups to question its legitimacy in a political context. Some communities experience environmental and social disharmony from hosting freedom campers. This can overshadow any expressed benefit, qualified or unqualified, and promotes ongoing debate to the allocation of public resources towards its provision.

Freedom camping, despite its broad permissible status, is not well treated in contemporary local planning processes and infrastructure policy as is commercial camping. Until the recent resurgence of media and political unrest over freedom camping it had just simply fell by the legislative wayside. Within this void breeds contempt. Contempt from commercial camping lobbies towards local governments directly involved in freedom camping provision and then freedom campers indirectly. Consequently, some local councils are now opting for punitive measures by prescribing freedom camping within reconstituted local bylaws as a non-permissible activity. That is, camping or parking overnight is signed as prohibited in certain residential, retail, parking or open spaces which is in effect prosecuting a “lockout” of the practice (Figure 1). The emerging challenge for councils is the increasing demand for camping access to limited freedom camping infrastructure, accentuating and perpetuating negative connotations of freedom camping as an alternative lifestyle and “gypsy-like” way of travelling. The planning and policy shortfalls coupled with diverging community value-sets shine a space, sector and time specific spotlight on the activity as it increasingly displays in public places.
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The number of freedom campers travelling Australia is predicted to rise (DTESB 2013a, 2014d; Tourism Research Australia 2016a, 2016c). Not least are those identified as grey nomads (Marshall 2014; Onyx & Leonard 2005), young families (Bearup 2009; Kembrey 2014) and international vanpackers (Gorman 2015; McCoy 2012). Temporary occupation and demand for freedom camping space is growing accordingly; estimated by Queensland’s Department of Tourism, Events and Small Business at a slightly faster rate than the drive market as a whole: 6% versus 5.4% per year (DTESB 2014d, p. 14). Tourism Research Australia report total caravanning on the increase across 2016, with a 20% rise in nights spent in commercial caravan parks and a 47% increase in nights spent free camping. Free-camping nights, as of the quarter ending September 2016, increased by 24% over the previous year to 18.1 million with adult couples and friends or relatives without children driving the growth (Tourism Research Australia 2016a). Motorhome users steered away from caravan parks across the period, with nights down 14%. Motorhomers also preferred to free camp, which has seen an increase in motorhome sector nights of 36% (Tourism Research Australia 2016a). ‘Increased patronage of non-commercial sites is a trend expected to continue which needs to be considered in provision of camping options’ (DTESB 2014a, p. 13).

Unfortunately, increased destination visitation of any description often generates conflicting interests where disputed resource allocations and exposed social values often precede effective planning and policy (Beiman 2017; Bowen et al. 2016; Kontis 2017). The latest RVing visitation statistics as reported by Tourism Research Australia (2016a) reflects approximately one third of total caravan nights and half of motorhome nights are spent freedom camping (Figure 2).

![Figure 2 - Caravan and motorhome nights ('000) by commercial and freedom locations](source: Tourism Research Australia (2016a) for year-end September 2016)

Despite this significant interest in freedom camping the practice is still viewed as marginal and undesirable through the eyes of some communities and management agencies. Freedom camping, as a specific sub-market within caravan and camping thus has a ready-made stigma to
defend. This stigma is an unfortunate legacy from notions of shoe-string travellers (Davidson 2005), societal dropouts of the counterculture hippie movement of the 20th Century, rather than akin with the more cultured ideals of education and rites of passage for individuals of class. The latter proffered through the earlier 18th Century Grand Tour era (Harding 2013; Kannisto 2014; O’Reilly 2006; Towner 1995).

Regardless of the stigma, recognition for the scale and implications of the freedom camping phenomenon is slowly growing in Australia (Davies et al. 2009; Department of Local Government and Communities 2014a; DLGC 2015b; DTESB 2012b; Holloway 2009). Hardy et al. (2014) went so far as to argue freedom camping ‘is one of the greatest challenges facing the RV industry’ (p. 7). Freedom camping is permeating transdisciplinary policy and network borders presenting as a “wicked policy problem” (Althaus et al. 2007; Rittel & Webber 1973) not easily defined and not open to easy formulation nor resolution (Dredge 2011b; Head & Alford 2015).

This thesis contends that planning and policy-making around freedom camping requires escalation up the state tourism agency agendas in anticipation of future demand and further unrest. However, mitigating potential for more camping problems or the intensifying of the current conflict demands fresh thinking. It requires working towards “new” ways of doing business: first, in respect to broadening governance arrangements within local government; second, in strengthening the performance of tourism policy for caravan and camping; and third, in development of opportunities for private enterprise (and local councils) to sustainably enter (or re-enter) the low-cost camping market through “new” regulatory supply. In keeping with the mantra of Local Government NSW (2015b) Fit for the future workshops, through this thesis I am keen to learn from history, work with “others” and move the freedom camping debate towards enriched and workable solutions for camping capacity building – specifically through “regenerative” planning and policy environments (Wahl 2017).

1.3 Thesis aim and objectives

The aim of this thesis is to describe, critically analyse and explain the public-policy process concerning freedom camping in the states of New South Wales and Queensland, Australia. It seeks to bring in-depth and evidence-based understanding of freedom camping decision-making processes with reference to public-policy theories, pressure groups, power, governance and institutions of the state. The study attempts to unravel the values and interests of those individuals and agencies involved in the freedom camping public-policy arena and how these intersect within
institutional arrangements. The past three decades in particular have witnessed significant shifts in RV supply and demand capabilities; evolved technological, social, environmental and political values in local communities; and, the introduction of new legislations, regulations and guidelines subject to impact the RV industry.

To meet the aim, freedom camping is first introduced as a timeworn international leisure pursuit though consumed across the past century by automobilised caravanning and now contemporary RVing. Second, reflecting these historical shifts at an international level, specific legislations affecting caravan and camping practices Australia-wide also demonstrate evolved periods of adjustment, particularly of public and private sector attitude towards freedom camping and freedom campers. Such change, specifically in public policy at a state level, has third, impacted the way local communities respond to freedom camping and also how local government deals with the phenomenon. The specific objectives of this study therefore are to:

1. Develop a conceptual taxonomy to aid international understanding of freedom camping and understanding of the “other” within contemporary caravanning.
2. Explain the legislative developments of freedom camping in Australia, focusing particularly on historic elements of supply and demand since Federation (1900) generally and auto-mobilisation particularly.
3. Critically analyse how local government in Australia, particularly in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, perceives, interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping.

1.4 Research approach

A pragmatic grounded approach guides this case study. Qualitative multi-method data collection techniques (Bryman 2004) underpinned by reflexive praxis (Gibbons et al. 1994) are used. Semi-structured interviews punctuated with constant comparative reference to the academic and grey literature support the study. It was also informed, in part, through my life-long personal engagement with the RV industry and its many stakeholders. Through deep immersion and crystallisation of data from different collection modes (Denzin & Lincoln 2005) I was able to critically observe and thematically analyse the phenomenon of freedom camping politics from different angles.

A full description of the methodology is presented through Chapter 2. However, I acknowledge here two streams of thematic analysis; theoretical and inductive. The theoretical approach to analysis starts from specific research questions with data interrogated and coding forced to align
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to the researcher’s a priori theoretical or analytical interests. In contrast, this study adopted the inductive approach to analysis which allows the data to inform the coding and themes, supporting broad research objectives through their evolutionary refinement (Braun & Clarke 2006). This constructivist approach emphasises the importance of multiple perspectives of participants (Charmaz & Gibbs 2013; Charmaz 2006). Additionally, it notes the influence of social structures and processes at macro to micro levels during the analysis and also the reflexive role of the researcher throughout the process. In order to better understand the process being observed, as a human instrument, I use my extensive personal RVing camping experiences and professional RV management operations experiences and purposefully embrace them.

Suddaby (2006, p. 634) argues the concept of conducting research in a bracketed manner without broad though informed ‘research objectives’ and ‘absent of theory’ simply ‘defies logic’. To capture the interplay between existing and emergent knowledge production and theory development I declare my mindfulness of the transdisciplinary theories of networks (Dredge 2006a; Hall & Jenkins 2004; Rowley 1997); collaborations (Jamal & Getz 1995; Tyler & Dinan 2001); stakeholders (Donaldson 1999; Freeman 1994, 1999); and theories of the state – people, power and policy (Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Fenna 2004; Hall 1994; Hall & Jenkins 1995; Ham & Hill 1984; Jaensch 1997; Lukes 2005). This open-minded position to enquiry is supported through the seminal works of Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 79) who, within their publication – *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* – acknowledge ‘that while formal theory can be generated directly from data we believe...it is more desirable, and usually necessary, to start the formal theory from a substantive one’. Recognising the influence of the state, people, power and policy on freedom camping politics this thesis takes as its substantive foundations the framework of Dredge and Jenkins (2011b) for the study of tourism planning and policy (Figure 3).

The conceptual framework of Dredge and Jenkins (2011b) guided the study’s development while maintaining sufficient flexibility for the development of new knowledge. Through iterative processes, though generally moving towards the centre, the analyst is encouraged to continuously move back and forth crossing framework boundaries, engaging with stakeholders and referring with the extent literature. As new knowledge emerges it is incorporated into the furthering analysis bringing greater understanding of the policy and planning process with consideration to the institutional context, issue drivers and influence, the direct and indirect actors engaged in the tourism phenomenon and the characteristics of the policy dialogues. Through grounded case study this thesis explores and explains these dynamic factors in respect to the politics of freedom camping in local communities underpinning an evolution to the framework.
1.5 Information sources

Primary and secondary sources informed this study. The multi-methods research design lends itself to using multiple sources of evidence - 'where one goes to get answers, with whom one talks, and what one observes' (Miles & Huberman 1984, p. 43). As the politics of freedom camping is a current phenomenon (i.e. real-life situations or issues that are in progress within their natural setting) there is a rich array of information that is easily accessed (Creswell 2013; Darke et al. 1998; Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2014). I was afforded many opportunities across the study period to engage directly with numerous interested stakeholders, media and academic literature; each involved differently within the RV political arena. In the interests of brevity, rather than re-addresses the
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complex nature of stakeholder engagement and influences on policies as they relate to freedom camping through policy dialogues I instead direct the reader to (Caldicott et al. 2014b) - *Freedom camping in Australia: Current status, key stakeholders and political debate*, published within Annals of Leisure Research. This paper identifies, specifically through pp. 424-431, the perspectives of key stakeholders in the policy process in line with principles of the conceptual framework (Figure 3).

As a barometer to the heat of the political debate that surrounds freedom camping, the international, national and local press were very rich and timely sources of comment from the various stakeholders. They highlight polarised environments that freedom camping imbues. The electronic media (particularly in the recent sense of social media and special interest fora1), allowed me to follow the thread of stories as they unfolded across time - sometimes across days, months and even several years. Formal semi-structured audio-recorded interviews with 37 participants also informed the study. These are complemented by a further four systematically notated informal conversations with interested individuals making a total of 41 informants (see Chapter 2 – Engaging with the informants).

Many informants continued to engage with me on an impromptu basis across the study - usually triggered by politically charged “focusing events” (Kingdon 1984, 2011). Such focusing events invited further opportunity for informal conversation. These often lead to formal invitation for me to attend state-level industry consultations and think tanks plus local level special interest committees meetings. Such invitations were common with attendance richly rewarding. These state industry, local government and business chamber networks facilitated easy and continual access for me to new informants and importantly to new data, such as organisational archives. Subsequently, requirement for physical searches within the archives of councils or state libraries was considerably reduced. Rather, when material of interest came to my attention I was successful in raising that material directly through personal web searches or through direct communications with the original source holder. This one-to-one relationship was useful in accessing “unpublished” evaluation reports, association policies and minutes to meetings.

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1 I joined several social media fora enabling daily access to the real-time social views and opinions as they unfolded. In keeping with my open and transparent positionality I registered on these fora in my real name and my university e-mail. However, I monitored these sites as a lurker rather than a participating contributor. It was only the site administrators, being fully cognoscente of my research interests, who acknowledged my presence. As such, they often engaged with me in a private, off forum, capacity at different intervals of political “focusing events”.
Industry conferences provided a vehicle to stimulate conversation around freedom camping. I attended several fora enabling direct engagement with participants, commercial operators, camping consumers, state and regional destination marketers and local government officers. I was invited to attend the CMCA’s 2013 annual rally in Maryborough (Qld) and the CAAA’s (formally CRVA) 2014 annual conference on the Gold Coast (Qld). Academic conferences were also used to project my research interests, test my ideas and present the developing conceptual theories as they formulated. Question and answer sessions post presentation also provided opportunity to learn from other academics about their experiences and contributions to RV research world-wide. A list of such presentations is offered on page vii. Council meetings, association newsletters, special interest magazines (usually accessed electronically), personal observations and photographs along with the extant academic literature, each combined with the above sources, guided the research.

1.6 Introducing the local government engagement

Four local government areas (LGA) were purposively selected for the “local” focus of the study; two in New South Wales and two in Queensland. Each LGA experiences a range of positive and negative situations arising from freedom camping. However, the political and social reactions within each, particularly to negative predicaments, display in uniquely different ways. Additionally, the councils’ responses to the broader freedom camping phenomenon also vary across the cases. As such, the LGAs and their tourist towns are purposely selected to represent difference among the cases (Yin 2014).

Local government area selection was guided through my prior professional engagement with members of the Australian Responsible Recreational Vehicle Forum (ARRVF), the Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN) and the Australian Institute of Tourism Officers (AITO). For purely pragmatic reasons related to the scope of the PhD (relevance, information richness, analytic representativeness and access, politics, time, budget, location and travel costs) the four LGAs are geographically delimited to the NSW/Qld border zone (Figure 4). While borders do present unique challenges from a planning and policy perspective (Timothy 2000) the state border in this scenario adds to the difference rather than being the focus of difference or comparison. The specific towns of interest within the LGAs, from the Pacific Ocean to the Simpson Desert, are: (1) Byron Bay, within Byron Shire Council (NSW); (2) Boonah, within Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld); (3) Lightning Ridge, within Walgett Shire Council (NSW); and (4) Birdsville within the Diamantina Shire Council (Qld).
None of the individual tourist towns are the administrative hub for their case council, but rather they are towns positioned on or near a major transit corridor and that have significant tourism appeal within the LGA. This appeal is demonstrated through a combination of tourism promotional literature and also the weighting of tourism and its constituent industry sectors, including freedom camping, as displayed through their individual community profiles (see Chapter 5). The profiles, specifically through indicators of full-time equivalent (FTE) employment and contribution to gross regional product (GRP), reflect tourism’s comparative significance to each LGA. By adopting this predetermined case stance I depart from the true analytic inductive approach where the second and subsequent cases are selected in relation to the analysis of those that preceded them.

Figure 4 - Cross-border zone case study locations
Source: Author

My rationale for the departure is twofold; convenience of access to participants and then their ability to assist me to meet the study objectives. First, my own residence and university campuses are located within the cross-border zone of Queensland and NSW. Second, these states were selected because Tourism Research Australia (TRA) (2012) reports Queensland as the most popular destination in Australia for RV travel with New South Wales the second largest generator
of RV travellers only marginally surpassed by Victoria. TRA also report Qld as the third largest generator of RV traffic (Tourism Research Australia 2012). Additionally, southern RV travellers migrating to warmer climes during the winters and also those embarking on the “big lap” around Australia commonly flow anti-clockwise (Cridland 2008). Victorians, by default travel through NSW and then along with their NSW compatriots cross the state border into Queensland at several highway centric border crossings (Figure 5). Qld also contributes significant southbound traffic along these same highway corridors. There are always exceptions to this annual, anti-clockwise migratory flow. That is, some RV travellers circumnavigate in a clock-wise direction and/or undertake A-B-A trips not inclusive of Qld with neither the generating region (A) nor the destination region (B) involving Queensland.

Figure 5 - Capital cities, main towns and interstate RV access corridors in Australia
Source: Author

Despite this latter possibility, the Qld/NSW border remained an appropriate reference zone for this study as high volumes of RV traffic are guaranteed along these major transit routes. Towns within the “border zone” that are closely aligned to the major transit corridor highways consequently were similarly deemed case appropriate study locations within the selected case LGAs. That is, such towns would be impacted by the RV traffic and by default impacted by freedom camping. Thus criteria developed for LGA and town case selection included:
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1. Being located within the cross-border zone of Qld and NSW.
2. Being within a major north-south highway/tourist transit corridor.
3. Having a freedom camping site within 10 kilometres of the main tourist centre.
4. Exhibiting geographic, demographic, population and “tourism reliance” differentiations.
5. Exhibiting differing level of engagement with freedom camping (e.g. volume, type, frequency, attitude, political maturity) and not just “hotspots” of controversy where a more literal replication between cases may be expected.

In establishing this criteria I was ever mindful to my own personal biases. Not just through the LGA selections, the towns and then choosing the interviewees within them but also across the entire research approach, design and analysis phases. This bias deserves further explanation and my position is presented next.

1.7 Researcher positionality

My pre-existing personal and local government relationships with many informants was key to my success in accessing rich and rewarding data. My connectedness brought me metaphorically inside the “tent”. It gave me admittance and facilitated discussion to explore emerging themes, issues, and innovations with participants, some that I had personally known for over 20 years. By example I was the national chairperson for ARTN (2008-2009) and continue my service as NSW vice chairperson to AITO. Additionally, I received the minutes from ARRVCF though I did not attend the meetings. This direct engagement with the industry allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the issues of planning and policy from their multiple, personalised and professional perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln 2008). With growing emphasis on researcher reflexivity, purposive action is required to disclose the manner in which information gathering, information exchange and knowledge production will take place. ‘Researcher positionality entails delineating one’s position in relation to study and understanding that one implication of this position is that it will influence different aspects of a research study, including the questions asked and the conclusions drawn’ (Foote & Gau Bartell 2011, p. 47). Of particular relevance they say is the ‘relationship between one’s life experiences and one’s positionality’ (p. 47).

I have half a century of experience in caravan, camping and RV worlds. Hence the unrest surrounding freedom camping has been with me for a long time. It comes as no surprise therefore that I found myself delving deeper into the politics of freedom camping policy through this thesis. My experience is primarily threefold: at the private enterprise level, that is as an entrepreneur developer and owner/operator of a family owned and operated commercial caravan and camping
park in north Queensland; and, more recently at the local government level with bureaucratic economic development responsibilities, inclusive of tourism and caravan park management, for a shire council in northern New South Wales. Finally, these periods of entrepreneurial and public sector engagement have been punctuated by a lifetime of camping, both commercial and freedom, in company firstly with my birth right family and secondly with my own family.

Such life-long engagement across a spectrum of RVing interests is arguably sufficient to classify me as a cultural insider (Merton 1978; Varvasovszky & Brugha 2000). Varvasovszky and Brugha (2000) suggest that ‘a strength of being a cultural insider is familiarity with local modes of verbal and nonverbal communication’. However, they also caution re potential limitations, especially ‘if pre-existing relationships with [“other”] stakeholders influence the [latter’s] willingness to participate and their responses’ (p. 340). Ganga and Scott (2006) suggest researchers as insiders are likely to be more aware of the divisions between themselves and the communities of interest. My relationships did cause some participants to at least question my allegiances but I don’t believe it initially precluded any from engaging with me in anything other than an honest and forthright manner. Similarly, it did not preclude participants from raising with me their concerns or interests, on several occasions, as the study progressed.

Though much of the insider/outsider literature refers to birth heritage, it is generally centric to ethnicity as the right to culture. However, Maffesoli (1995) refers to a culture of neo-tribes where one need not be born into the culture in a strictly tribal sense. Rather through shared interests and common association individuals congregate to form collectives of a more nebulous culture. These interests for example could be based on minorities, gender, social exclusion, caste, health, education or leisure (e.g. caravanning). Each possess potential foundations for a neo-tribe, albeit their connectedness may be physical or virtual (Gossling et al. 2016). To satisfy communal connectedness often means sacrificing some individual freedom in order to conform to the chosen community values (Tonge et al. 2013). I was reminded by Carr (2017) that ‘this clearly situates the human as an individual who is able and willing to make conscious decisions about his/her own freedom and position in society’ (p. 4).

As a researcher that has freely chosen to participate within many of the RVing neo-tribes with greater and lesser status across my lifetime, I contend that my participation in one neo-tribe is certainly not to the exclusivity of others. In fact, Merton (1978, p. 22) reminds of the ‘crucial fact of social structure that individuals have not a single status but a status set: a complement of innumerable interrelated statuses which interact to affect both their behaviour and perspectives’.
However, in contrast to statuses taken one at a time, status sets he concedes can introduce severe theoretical problems for total insider and total outsider doctrines of social epistemology:

The array of status sets in a population means that aggregates of individuals share some statuses and not some others; or to put this in context, that they typically confront one another simultaneously as insiders and outsiders (p. 22).

Building upon the precautionary principles of some founding fathers of sociology, Simmel, Weber and Bacon for example, Merton also presents the case for not erroneously aligning solely with the strong form of the insider nor the outsider doctrines. The former ‘with its fallibilities of group loyalties, false opinion and dominated customs’ and the latter which contends ‘that knowledge about groups unprejudiced by membership in them is accessible only to outsiders’ (Merton 1978, p. 31). Here Merton revisits the epistemological problem of Verstehen – to understand subject and object in a deep way.

Often, a blurring of boundaries forms between the researcher and the researched (Weiner-Levy & Abu Rabia Qeder 2012), the academic and the subject (Kawulich 2005), the insider and the outsider (Foote & Gau Bartell 2011) and between theory and practice (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2009). The dynamics of inter-subjective communication between the researcher as practitioner, the practitioner as researcher and participant members, all reflecting and dialogically building intercultural understandings and power relations, contributes to the process. A transformation process occurs facilitating inter-personal development (Prus 1997) and co-production of new knowledge (Gibbons et al. 1994) in an eclectic manner. Dredge and Hales (2012, p. 422) argue that researchers undertaking community case study research can adopt ‘a position along a continuum of political action’. The continuum is anchored in a phronetic approach (as described by Flyvbjerg 2001; Maguire 1997) at one end and academic activist approach (as described by Higgins-Desboilles 2010; Maxey 1999) at the other.

Furthering the descriptions of these earlier authors, Dredge and Hales (2012) advance that the phronetic approach places the researcher in a value-neutral position with respect to the community even though still politically embedded in the case study. However, for me, as one that still has personal perspectives and knowledge that will infiltrate my communications, the mere choice of phenomenon/community under study is a political act, far from being value-neutral; perhaps location–neutral is my preferred expression. Location, according to Varvasovszky and Brugha (2000, p. 340), ‘pertains to affiliation, to having a potential vested interest in the outcome of the process or being part of or outside of the culture or context where the analysis is done’. Laurier (2003, p. 135) emphasises that the best research ‘is generally done by those who have
been involved in and tried to do and/or be a part of the things they are observing’ and I certainly meet that criteria. With my personal history, and particularly the intimacy I hold with certain actors and the cultures that flow from same, I was however, mindful of the need to resist the attempts by certain community members to legitimise their particular stakeholder interests (Dredge 2011a).

Letting go of pre-conditioning ideas was also important for me. Chiefly it was those that caused me to think perhaps this new community of freedom campers isn’t quite “right”. They were presenting so differently to caravan site dependent customers; and those to which I had been accustomed as a commercial caravan and camp ground operator. It was evidential that ‘those who use non-commercial sites are [or maybe] a different group of travellers from those that use commercial sites’ (DTESB 2014d, p. 14). In this regard, I needed to step outside my own comfort zone, getting it into my own head that freedom campers had a way of doing things that worked fine for them. In fact it was WE, the collective or we as “outsiders”, that are the ones in need of learning how to harmonise with that “other” space. It was important for me to seek an understanding of all perspectives and promote this multi-perspective understanding of the freedom camping politics through this thesis. This is the position that I believe is respectfully presented within and also through the publications emanating from my broad RVing research interests. Such publications (see page v) serve as modest foundational benchmarks or “high ground” for regional tourism practitioners as they continue to navigate their own “swamp” (Schon 1983) of freedom camping politics.

Due to my own extensive industry (swamp) experiences and my ongoing professional engagements with many of the informants I was also conscious to be completely overt - fully open and transparent - throughout my dealings with them (Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen 2012; Gold 1958; Kawulich 2005). Even so, my stance was challenged by some as activism (Flyvbjerg 2001; Higgins-Désboilles 2010; Maguire 1997; Maxey 1999) and it continued to be tested across the study period. In these circumstances I believe that my pluralist pragmatic worldview enabled me to better appreciate the perspectives of the “other” and recognise that reality for each is not always consistent. It is “okay” for multiple perspectives to exist around a common phenomenon without a “single” or “right” answer. This then leads to the question, “well then - so what”. What is the actual contribution of the research?
1.8 Contribution of the research to tourism and policy studies

Tourism is an important contributor to the Australian economy (Productivity Commission 2015). It has been the particularly good news story for Australia’s economy over the past year. November 2016 data shows an 11.4% increase in international tourism arrivals on the year before with domestic tourism also growing 7% during this period (Tourism Research Australia 2016a, 2016c). Additionally, Beiman (2017) notes Australia’s inbound tourism growth is almost triple the world average of 3.9% (see also World Tourism Organisation 2017). On the back of this strong growth and increasing importance, tourism has often been hailed as the panacea for economic prosperity in many rural and urban destinations (Jackson & Murphy 2006). In regional Australia especially, ‘tourism has gained increasing currency as an agent for regional economic development’ (Jackson & Murphy 2006, p. 1018). This agency is most evident in rural towns trying to recover from the collapse of first, their traditional agricultural base and second, the resources industry (Baker 2016; McLennan 2015; McLennan et al. 2015; Yeomans 2016). Annualised tourism exports of $47 billion, based on September 2016 figures, had individually surpassed both of those two flailing stalwarts; rural exports at $42 billion and coal at $41 billion (Yates 2017).

However, while tourism looks bright for Australia this thesis reveals underlying problems in the industry. These lay particularly with servicing infrastructure and its accommodating planning and policy for the caravan and camping sector. Planning and policy has failed to keep up with tourism demands, diversity and trends (see also Beiman 2017; Jackson & Murphy 2006) and ‘if Australia wants to continue enjoying the benefits of its tourism boom, it needs to address these critical issues’ (Beiman 2017). This is particularly so in regional communities suffering pendulation periods of boom and bust induced through changing industrial patterns, fluctuating commodity prices, skill shortages, harsh climatic events or global economic stresses (Jackson & Murphy 2006) as “focusing events” (Kingdon 1984).

With resource workers ebbing and flowing across the last three decades many regional towns who gave little attention to nurturing their recreational RVing clientele during the successive resources booms, have variously claimed that freedom camping was ruining their livelihoods. Caravan park operators for some time have described freedom camping as ‘depriving local operators of business’ (The Observer 2005) and ‘cutting out private enterprise’ (Quinlivan 2014), while a caravan park to motel conversion saw a ‘drop in tenants’ (Burgess & Van Extel 2015) and a coastal operator was ‘left feeling ripped off after she noticed caravans and RVs skipping her park and heading straight to the showgrounds’ (Stevens 2016).
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Freedom camping, even in the face of such incriminating claims, is contributing to the nation’s tourism revenues and is seen by “other” stakeholders as a vital element to achieving the vision outlined in key drive-tourism strategies; that of doubling overnight visitor expenditure by 2020 (see DLGC 2015a; DTESB 2014d; GPSC 3 Committee 2014; Tourism Research Australia 2016b; Trade and Investment NSW 2012). State governments are recognising the economic, social, physiological and environmental contributions that tourism can make and are becoming more involved in developing policy responses aimed at maximising positive impacts and reducing costs (Dredge 2011b; Hall 1994). Recognising a knowledge gap in the way policy-making was understood, Dredge (2001a) echoed earlier calls by Mathews (1978), Richter (1989) and Hall and Jenkins (1995), chiefly for the need of further research focusing on the way policy is conceived, issues are debated and solutions negotiated. These authors concur that focusing attention to such issues can unlock the ‘black-box’ of policy-making (Dredge 2001a; Hall & Jenkins 1995). I am thus reminded that consideration of how tourism policy knowledge is structured and generated is critical. Hence, increased attention to the role of tourism policy research is required so that researchers such as myself can better understand how my individual piece of research on freedom camping, for instance, fits into the wider field of tourism, leisure and recreation policy analysis. Hence, ‘the necessity for this research and its contribution to the body of knowledge has also been identified’ (Dredge 2001b, p. 14). That, then, is its legitimacy and its contribution in a freedom camping domain; one which is increasingly challenged and a research field that is underrepresented.

Freedom camping is both contested and defended where ‘planners, the public and the market struggle to work together’ in uneasy collaborations (Rogers & Schatz 2016). Internationally, community leaders and community planners are being asked (and indeed lobbied) to consider the needs of all types of caravanning visitors to their communities, not just those that choose to use commercial accommodation venues such as caravan parks (Brooker & Joppe 2013; Caldicott et al. 2014b; DTESB 2014d). Set within such contested political, spatial, economic, technological and social contexts, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the barriers, constraints and opportunities – in theory and practice – for community-based policy-making for freedom camping. In doing so the thesis makes a number of valuable contributions to the existing body of knowledge, specifically in three areas.

First, this thesis presents an original taxonomy of caravanning making a new contribution to the tourism literature generally but the freedom camping literature more specifically. It partially addresses Caldicott’s (2011) concern of a research and policy void that “(un)rules” on freedom
camping. The contemporary movement of freedom camping globally may well be likened to a return towards the explorer phase of destination development generally, commonly analysed through Butler’s (1980) enduring tourism area life-cycle (TALC) model, and the caravan park development cycle specifically (see Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b). The thesis expands upon the fragmented caravanning literature of the last three decades as very few scholarly articles identify directly with freedom camping. Rather, it is more common for the phenomenon to be only superficially addressed through indirect references to broader concepts of freedom within the developing caravan, camping, RV and leisure literature.

Second, this thesis brings valuable new knowledge to the application of policy for freedom camping specifically and the way public policy is formed more generally. It presents a conceptualisation of national legislation effecting freedom camping in Australia with critical turning points displayed across four time periods from 1900 to present. Reflecting upon the alignment of stakeholder stories within this thesis, and those recounted by Dredge and Jenkins (2011a) in their ground-breaking edition, Stories of Practice: Tourism Policy and Planning, this thesis provides important new contributions to understanding the tensions and struggles of tourism policy and planning for freedom camping.

Third, this thesis, offers an evolved presentation to a conceptual framework for the study of tourism planning and public policy. As industry and community groups are increasingly well organised and resourced, they adopt an increasing range of roles in the policy process. Dredge and Jenkins (2011a, p. 366) contend ‘... if there is any possibility of improving tourism planning based on the insights and lessons contained within these stories [of practice] and the wider body of knowledge within which they are set, we must return to consider the role of government and its relationships with business and community interests and hence the concepts of governance’. Like the Stories of Practice, stories in this thesis reinforce ‘that there is a major disconnect for freedom camping between government policy in tourism [which, again is demonstrated to be predominately underpinned by economic development, regional competitiveness and investment attraction agendas] and the aspirations of local communities’ (Dredge & Jenkins 2011a, p. 366). The stories herein increase recognition of the communities of interest and their intersects within the freedom camping phenomenon to inform a model which principally recognises the role of power in varying global circumstances of context, space, place, sector and time.
1.9 Thesis structure

Chapter 2 describes the specific methods used for the study and expands upon the research approach outlined within this Chapter. Data collection aligns through a series of semi-structured interviews supported by personal communications, attendance at meetings, fora and conferences. These activities were undertaken with constant review of the published academic literature, general and social media plus my own personal camping anecdotes for real-time flavour bringing a balance of applied, theoretical and social commentary to the analysis.

Chapters’ 3 to 5 present three distinct areas of findings from the analysis. Chapter 3 introduces a taxonomy of caravanning to aid international understanding of the “other” within freedom camping politics. The taxonomy explains the complex networks of modern caravanning in which the freedom camping phenomenon is set. It provides an international window into the current political debate and demonstrates how complexity and jargon is contributing to that debate. Chapter 4 introduces the legislative context for freedom camping in Australia. It conceptualises how the phenomenon has grown through four distinct, though not mutually exclusive, periods where freedom camping has endured varying forms of legislative and political acceptance. Chapter 5 engages directly with local government processes generally and experiences from four council cases specifically. The chapter reveals stakeholder political ideologies and unravels their beliefs, values and interests as these intersect with each “other” and institutions of the state. The local perspectives are supplemented by those of respective state agencies or associations.

Chapter 6 builds an integrated discussion around the findings of the taxonomy, legislative developments and local government engagement chapters. It takes from the individual findings theoretical building blocks of power relations and decision-making to inform discussion on political modernisation, political space and governance. The chapter delves into the freedom camping policy environment, policy arena and stakeholder domains in Australia before introducing first, a policy and practice vision for the future of freedom camping and, second, an evolving conceptual framework for the study of public policy for tourism, recreation and leisure.

Chapter 7 makes concluding remarks, summarising how the three objectives of the research have been addressed. It clarifies the limitations of the study, describes the implications of the study and discusses potential areas for further research.
Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Introduction

Further to the research approach introduced through Chapter 1 (see section 1.4) this Chapter explains how the case study was conducted. The common sense practice for change orientated paradigm of pragmatism (Denscombe 2008) that underpins the study is introduced next. Section 2.3 presents the guiding path and methodological justification for the conduct of this mono-strategy, multi-methods (qualitative) research. The design of choice is grounded case study as this approach was deemed capable of giving maximum explanatory power to the complex and under-explored phenomenon of freedom camping and its politics as it transpires under natural settings. Section 2.4 introduces stages of the research process from identifying stakeholders, engaging and interviewing informants to data interpretation and feedback loops. The process of constant comparative data analysis is described through section 2.4.5 including the way I used NVivo as a data storage, coding and retrieval tool at 2.4.6. Section 2.5 provides the human ethics approval details for the study as granted through the Division of Research at Southern Cross University before concluding remarks are offered at section 2.6.

2.2 The research paradigm of pragmatism

Originating in the Chicago schools of Sociology and Psychology pragmatism is ‘a philosophy rooted in common sense’ (Sleeper 1986, p. 8). It is ‘dedicated to the transformation of culture and resolution of conflicts that divide us’ (p. 9). Pragmatism is a theory of enquiry primarily concerned with meaning-making or epistemology as measured by it consequences (Betzner 2008; Maxcy 2003). A pragmatic stance advances mixing multiple sources of evidence to attain and modify knowledge in order to inform potential solutions to problems (Green & Hall 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Working back and forth between specific results and their general implications as an iterative process as they are applied in new experiences (Green & Hall 2010; Morgan 2007) I was able to find solutions that can be used in other settings and give justification for making those claims (Morgan 2007).

Research is used (useful) when it connects to practice and fits the context of a practitioner’s experience (Mohrman & Lawler 2012). Practitioners themselves decide whether knowledge is useful (Rynes 2012). Mohrman and Lawler (2012) advise researchers to ask themselves:
... how to define and conduct their research with enough exposure to and consideration of contextual richness to explain in what contexts the knowledge is generated and the contextual elements that contribute to the dynamics that are observed and the organisational effectiveness that is obtained (p. 49).

The way to achieve contextual awareness is to spend time with multiple practitioners working with and directly learning of their problems. This is consistent with the Van de Ven (2007) argument that engaged research brings many sources of knowledge to bear on important problems. This is likely to have the greatest impact on practice.

Organisations that traditionally service camping markets such as commercial caravan parks, camping associations, local governments and state governments are operating in constantly changing environments. Each needs research that ‘can help them adapt to these changes ... especially outlier organisations experimenting with new approaches’ (Mohrman & Lawler 2012, pp. 41-42; see also Yip et al. 2009). Outliers also provide fertile fields in which to learn about the emerging order. Outliers redefine problems and adopt innovative strategies in dynamic environments (Mohrman & Lawler 2012; Starbuck 2006). To establish what would be useful to freedom camping practitioners and determine how best to collect current evidence of their issues I drew on my own experiences: first, with the commercial caravan and camping industry; second, local government; and third, regional tourism management and destination marketing. Through the insider networks associated with each I had easy access to significant gatekeepers. They assisted me in formulating a research strategy that ensured timely access to data relevant to the research objectives. New knowledge co-produced with practitioners is duly acknowledged to carry biases. The specific influence that I, as the researcher, brought to the project was declared through Chapter 1 - Researcher positionality.

McDermid (2006) suggests to suppose we must wipe away personal and experiential bias and find some neutral starting point for our research enquiry is unrealistic. This view is in keeping with the tenants of eminent philosophers and renowned pragmatists such as Peirce, James, Dewey, Quine, Popper and Rorty (McDermid 2006). Pragmatists prefer instead to embrace naturalism (see Lincoln & Guba 1985) with ‘the researcher as a social being also creating social processes as the product of the inquiry’ (McDermid 2006, p. 7). Therefore, as Glaser (2007) postulates, “all is data”, and Baker et al. (1992) advocate, previous experience is data, thus while ‘no effort is made to put aside ideas or assumptions about the situation being studied’ (p. 1357) any personal biases are nonetheless acknowledged.
Pragmatism is therefore adopted as the paradigm of choice for this multi-methods study as it is exploratory in purpose and the unstable but fast paced political nature of the phenomenon lends itself to be open to engaging with whatever data is necessary. Data was obtained through whatever procedure was appropriate and available to me at any time (see section 1.5) to orientate the outcomes of the research as actions which carry meaning and consequence, thus meeting the stated aim and objectives as outlined in Chapter 1.

2.3 The mono-strategy multi-method design and justification

I adopt elements of two complimentary qualitatively driven research methodologies, case study and grounded theory, to theoretically frame my research in a space that reflects the ‘multidimensionality of our social experiences and lived realities’ (Mason 2006, p. 10). Figure 6, representing a suite of mono-strategy multi-methods research designs, situates a methodological justification path for this enquiry. Despite its linear presentation the actual research process was quite iterative and reflexive. Borrowing from the conceptual presentation of Katrin Niglas (2010) the methodologies are treated in multi-dimensional form as comparative and complimentary tools, albeit with different methodological perspectives owning their individual assumptions.

Frequently, planning and policy decisions are made not by one person but by multiple individuals who represent diverse interests and hold unique perspectives on what kind of information is accurate and credible (Patton 1997). Like researchers, these decision-making stakeholders hold beliefs about what types of information are most accurate and authentic, and what type of information they deem best supports their decision-making. In many situations it takes a combination of source material and a combination of presentation forms for the multiple stakeholders to embrace the finding and confidently use them in their planning (Benkofske 1996; Chelimsky 1997; Patton 1997; Smith 1997). Multi-methods research is a frequently used tool capable of meeting the needs of multiple stakeholders and/or the individual groups who comprise the audience for the research endeavour. This is especially pertinent in the field of research on public policy. Unfortunately, says Manfredo et al. (2003), social science information sometimes falls short of its potential for facilitating resourcing decisions due to the ‘understanding gaps’ between resource managers and researchers (p. 219). They state ‘it is clear that researchers must improve the applicability of their investigations if their goal is to inform management decisions’ (p. 220). Through this thesis, I challenge old ways and lay tentative foundations for pushing through existing barriers, traditional constraints and mainstream thinking around freedom camping for the advancement of the regional and urban communities affected by the freedom camping phenomenon.
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Figure 6 - Mono-strategy multi-methods justification path
Source: Author
Through a case study on freedom camping in Australia, with particular focus to four LGAs, two each within the states of New South Wales and Queensland, this thesis recognises multiple stakeholder who uphold multiple realities in the struggle of freedom camping politics. The grounded multi-methods approach aptly supports the aims of this study; to investigate the politics of freedom camping policy and the implications of such policy (or non-policy) on regional and urban communities. The thesis presents new knowledge in the service of those who wish to make programming or policy decisions based on the research results. Just as with the broader paradigmatic and methodological debates, the discourses and definitions around case study are no less controversial. The seminal work of Robert Yin (1981, 2014) are synonymous with case study writing over the last three decades. It is universally agreed that case study research is ‘an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ and it ‘relies on multiple sources of evidence’ (Darke et al. 1998 p. 275).

Still, questions arise over, among others, the hierarchy of case study research: is it a research design in its own right (Yin 1981, 2014) or a methodology within a suite of methodologies, either quantitative, qualitative or mixed? (Creswell 2013). Others, including Boudah (2011) prefer to place case study at the foundation of all qualitative inquiry. He advocates forms of ‘single case, multi-case or multi-site’ enquiry to establish a fundamental premise of qualitative research – ‘what is going on here’ - the ‘here’ in case study being the unit of analysis (p. 126). Creswell (2013) suggests ‘the case maybe a concrete entity such as an individual, a small group, [an organisation] or a partnership. At a less concrete level it may be a community, a relationship, a decision process, or a specific project’ (p. 98).

Variations on the case forms posited by Boudah, Creswell (2013, p. 99) explains, ‘exist in terms of intent’. The instrumental form allows the researcher ‘to focus on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue’ (p. 99; see also Stake 1995). The intrinsic form is one that supports the researcher to focus on the case itself because the case presents a unique situation (p. 100) or as Yin (2014) prefers, an unusual situation, that being distinct from common. Both terms reinforce his position that ‘cases not be considered a sample of any larger universe or population’ (Yin 2014p. xxiv) and consequently ‘statistical generalisation should not be inferred’ (p. 40). Finally, in the collective form ‘or multiple case study, the one issue or concern is again selected, but the researcher selects multiple cases to illustrate the issue’ (p. 40).
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The key to case study research is to define a case that can be bounded or described within certain parameters, such as a specific place and time. The unit of analysis must also provide for sufficient breadth and depth of data to be collected to allow the research objectives to be adequately addressed (Darke et al. 1998). Therefore the objectives they suggest, ‘informs the selection of the level and scope of the unit of analysis’ (p. 281), or ‘where one goes to get answers, with whom one talks, what one observes’ (Miles & Huberman 1984, p. 4). Real-life situations or issues that are in progress within their natural setting and are rich in accurate information that is easily accessed and not lost across time make for ideal case studies (Creswell 2013; Darke et al. 1998; Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 2014).

Using the logic of replicability, whereby the enquirer replicates the procedures for each case, Creswell (2013, p. 99) argues multiple case study alleviates ‘the general reluctance of qualitative researchers to generalise from one case to another because the context of cases differ’ and as the ‘evidence from multiple cases is considered more compelling the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust’ (Yin 2014, p. 57). Although statistical generalisations to a population is not the goal of case study research, several authors (Cavaye 1996; Crow & Berggren 2014; Darke et al. 1998; Yin 1994) confirm theoretical or analytical generalisations are appropriate where case study results are used to develop theory or to test previously developed theory. I have purposely selected four local government areas as multiple cases to establish their different perspectives on the politics of freedom camping policy and thereby ‘increase analytic generalisability’ (Creswell 2013 p.99; see also Yin 2014, p. 40).

2.4 Stages of the research

This section describes the six stages of the research process, specifically outlining the rationale for secondary sources to set the study context before introducing the informants. It then describes the interview as a technique for obtaining the informant data before outlining the process of analysis.

2.4.1 Engaging with the literature and identifying stakeholders

Stage one takes a social constructivist approach to developing a worldly and contextual understanding of freedom camping policy, praxis and politic. A combination of secondary sources including the literature, general and social media, industry magazines and newsletters, web-sites, parliamentary reports and council archive files were critically reviewed. These firstly revealed a growing but fragmented international literature of caravanning which avoids any offerings of real substance to the complexities of the freedom camping phenomenon. Additionally, the status of
freedom camping as a policy issue was largely absent within the literature, despite its prevalence within general news and social media fora. Further, exploration of freedom camping’s history in Australia provided deeper understanding of its domestic standing, including legislative progress relative to the phenomenon (see Chapter 4 - Recognising four periods of policy activity). Examples of policy-making, process and implementation (or not) for freedom camping within select local government settings was also reviewed (see Chapter 5 - Local government engagement). Each of these secondary streams informed a greater appreciation of the Australian context and practice of freedom camping within its international background.

Such a breath of sources provided me with sufficient preliminary but important foundational data. Patton (2002, p. 294) concurs that this secondary data can stimulate further paths of inquiry by providing a ‘behind the scenes look at program processes’ that are then followed up and/or expanded through later interviews. Subsequently, these secondary sources were supported by communications with current industry gate keepers as leaders and political figures. An iterative process followed where secondary sources were continuously scanned for relevance in between interviewing and concurrently with data analysis. Secondary sources, both political and situational in nature (e.g. media and council reports) often developed spontaneously across the study, particularly following controversial camping activity (focusing event) or publicised camping interventions.

2.4.2 Accessing the informants

Stage two supported the gathering of primary data through direct communication (telephone, online, face-to-face) with industry leaders from the known stakeholder population. This included observations during personal attendance to private meetings, public consultation workshops and to established fora of this community. One intended setting was the Australian Responsible Recreational Vehicle Camping Forum (ARRVCF). The forum was hosted by CMCA and convened biannually at a Sydney airport hotel. Meetings were hosted between March 2010 and August 2012. I originally planned to access informants through the ARRVCF. Participant attendance to the forum was voluntary. For many potential informants it was an existing and scheduled activity. Hence, my attendance and thus access to them was not considered as adding a further burden upon their time. Participants were drawn nationally and with representation from interested stakeholders of national, state and local governments; their respective departmental agencies; RV pressure groups; RV manufacturers; suppliers of RV rentals; travel media; civic and community leaders. Through my previous private and public sector engagements I had existing links to many individuals within several of these multiple neo-tribal networks (see Chapter 3 – Pre-trip
determiners). The forum was to provide me, as a cultural insider (Davidson 2010; McKeegan 2011), a front row seat.

Also assisting me to facilitate this research, and then access to participants, was a letter of endorsement from Caravan Industry Association Australia (CIAA), previously Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia (CRVA), as the peak national caravan and camping industry association (Appendix 2.1 - Letters of support). Similarly, I had endorsement from the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) as the peak “freedom of choice” camping consumer advocacy group. With support from the two peak bodies participating in the ARRVCF, though ideologically opposed in freedom camping policy and practice, this forum was considered a convenient medium for me to have continued access to other engaged stakeholders beyond those two peak bodies. This approach supports the agent/target/broker philosophy of Foucault (1980a) who sees differentiated positions of individuals or institutions in a localised setting with power as omnipresent. The power exists within the set of specific relationships, ‘between every point of a social body underlying seemingly non-political institutions’ (Cheong & Millar 2000, p. 378).

What was needed though was a study of the power relations around freedom camping, ‘of power in its external visage’ (Cheong & Millar 2000, p. 376; see also Foucault 1980b). As Foucault infers, agents or targets or power brokers can be unaligned but still remain interested in hearing, seeing, observing or intervening across the divided ideologies. This point emphasises the importance also for me to ensure that my ‘position or place within the network’ is transparent (Foucault 1980b). Individuals, he claims ‘are vehicles of power not its points of application’

We must not look for who has the power and who is deprived of it; nor for who has the right to know and who is forced to remain ignorant. We must seek, rather, the pattern of the modifications which the relationships of force imply by the very nature of their process (Foucault 1978, p. 99).

Unfortunately, the ARRVCF folded in August 2012 before my interview schedule commenced. The forum ceased to meet for political reasons, among others: a quiet disquiet between respective lobby groups; a lack of funding; and a lack of independence of the voluntary CMCA secretariat. In the void of the ARRVCF, I was then required to commence direct engagement with the many individuals of interest.

Alternate first contact with potential informants was now either through a personal phone call or an e-mail. If by e-mail I only briefly introduced myself and my research interests, inviting their reciprocal interest and advising that I would make telephone contact in a couple of days. When
the direct call was made the participants were already tuned to my topic. This served to break-the-ice and allow me to introduce the research aims and objectives more deeply and relate the learning opportunity relative to us both - the direct participant (organisation or local government) and also to the wider stakeholder community. Additionally, it served to build rapport between myself and the participants.

Following the telephone contact all potential informants then received a personalised e-mail including an introductory letter on Southern Cross University letterhead (see Appendix 2.2). This correspondence authenticated the research and delivered an information statement (see Appendix 2.3) outlining the purpose, methods and proposed outcomes of the study. The statement also advised what was expected of the participant including the time commitment required of them and reinforcing: (a) the voluntary nature of participation; (b) that they may withdraw at any time; (c) that interviews may be recorded; (d) that information provided may be used in the thesis and subsequent publications such as conference proceedings, research journals and books; and (e), that both the researcher and supervisory staff at the University could be contacted for clarification at any time throughout the study. The initial telephone approach that was reconfirmed via official documentation promoted further embedded engagement for the informants which fostered a mutual knowledge-making environment.

Continuous follow-up to personal communications, participation at common meetings, plus analysis and comments to meeting minutes, for example, all contributed to the relationship and knowledge production environment. Attendance at the industry fora, including CMCA rallies, CIAA conferences, and council meetings in particular, allowed for direct observation of engagement by “others”. I was particularly interested to observe their interactions and relationships: those existing, those developing and/or those disintegrating between participants. These relationships sometimes changed across the study. Identification and securing of further potential interview subjects also developed through this stage. Some informants provided me very extensive referral lists via e-mail, to which I was further able to add my own follow-up notes.

In total, a collective pool of 41 “intimates” (Dalton 1959) was used to inform the study. Intimates are individual informants that Dyer and Wilkins (1991) describe as ‘with whom I had developed a personal relationship and from whom I could glean information on a more-or-less regular basis’ (p. 616). They were identified firstly through the purposively selected gatekeepers of CIAA and CMCA and then further theoretical sampling. All targeted informants agreed to participate. Each was keen to tell their own “story”, to tell of their own experiences – positive, negative, political,
participatory, or otherwise - with freedom camping. Bazeley (2013, p. 49) supports this sampling method suggesting that ‘samples are initially purposive in that they are selected especially to meet particular research goals or to provide variation; they are then supplemented by a theoretical sample which is designed to allow exploration of questions that arise from initial analyses’.

Several informants, having heard about the study through their colleagues, also made direct contact with me. They too requested involvement with the study due to the topical nature of the freedom camping issue within their particular domain. Not all these contacts became first round interviewees. However, their interests were certainly noted in a field journal for future reference. Some of these, at a later date, were re-approached for formal interview, while others were contacted by phone or e-mail only for crystallisation; verification or clarification of information or concepts as the study progressed. This loose and informal communication kept the two-way dialogue open giving participants a sense of ongoing contribution to the study and purpose for their involvement.

General demographic information was recorded for all 41 informants within an excel database. Details such as their level of representation (i.e. by state of origin and arena of voice), organisation structure (i.e. private enterprise, government, association), position held within their representative organisation (i.e. policy or bureaucracy), major salient issues identified (i.e. compliance, choice, benefit, impact), and finally, their political position and rational for same on the phenomenon of freedom camping (i.e. identified, acknowledge, supported, tolerated, rejected). These broad level but telling indicators, served as useful guides for further analysis and interrogation of the interview data. The demographic characteristics of the final participants are summarised through Appendix 2.4. This summary provides a snapshot of 41 present-day stakeholders of the freedom camping “interest” community that participated in the study.

2.4.3 The semi-structured interview as the research instrument

Stage three introduced semi-structured interviews designed to gain an insight into macro to micro elements of freedom camping politics. The interview, as a technique for generating data (Kvale & Flick 2007; Patton 2002), is common to both grounded theory and case study methodology. An initial time investment of approximately one hour on a single occasion for the interview was requested of the participants and a subsequent half an hour for verification of the interview transcript was also proposed by me and communicated to participants through the introductory correspondence.
Thirty-seven formal interviews averaging 60 minutes were conducted across the study period. The timing of the interviews was scheduled to the participants’ convenience to reduce any additional downtime, travel and meeting liabilities for them. Some participants voluntarily offered more time to the project dependent upon their level of interest, institutionalisation and existing engagement in the freedom camping conversations. A flexible or ‘creative interviewing’ approach was adopted allowing me ‘to embrace the immediate, concrete situation’ and ‘understand how it was affecting what was being communicated’ (Douglas in Jenkins 1996, p. 265). This manner of interviewing certainly worked well with my participants. They all appeared to be at ease with the process. Even though some had expressed initial reservations about the output and then outcomes from the thesis they each contributed, from my observation, freely and openly to the conversations.

All interviews were conducted between April 2013 and March 2014. Due to the nationally geographic spread of individual informants and the bi-state spread of case study regions, scheduling of interviews to meet pure theoretical sampling and constant comparative analysis criteria became tricky. As a solution, and a slight departure from the pure methods, the interviewing became a “batching” or clustering exercise, in two ways. First, in regard to the geographic spread of informants and second as an analysis tool. This approach to analysis was demonstrated by Guest et al. (2006) through their experiment with data saturation and variability to test sample size. They analysed 60 interview transcripts in batch groups of six before moving to a further six and so forth.

In my case, informants grouped in Sydney and Melbourne were thus all targeted while I was in those cities for complementary purposes, i.e. conference or meeting attendance. Similarly, to access the western Shires of Walgett and Diamantina, I undertook a four week “freedom camping” road trip. While key gatekeeper interviews at each LGA were pre-scheduled, usually with the tourism, economic development or planning managers, ancillary informants were contacted only after the gatekeeper referral. In many cases these were direct through personally introduced handshakes. This process worked very well for me in regard to accessing otherwise “busy people” as the rapport was already established through the transference of trust from the referring agent.

Additionally, the road trip was pre-planned to coincide with two nationally significant events. In Queensland, the Birdsville Races provided the backdrop and in New South Wales, the state tourism awards was my entrée. The Races guaranteed all the “right people” would be in Birdsville during the week, making access convenient for them as well as me. By default though, interviewing under those natural circumstances also necessitated that deep analysis of each
interview audio (or transcript) could not happen before the next referred interview took place – hence they were batched for latter comparisons and analysis.

For Walgett Shire, I was able to use my position as a Judge to the NSW Tourism Awards as an easy but formal inroad to gain access to several key informants. In this regard, some informants had been pre-advised by the State Awards Organising Committee that I would be calling upon them and I too had made direct telephone and e-mail contact with them prior to arrival. Subsequently, the rapport to conduct the freedom camping interview was already established post the judging processes for these particular informants. Informants from both western LG locations became very reliable “intimates” with rich and ongoing dialogue ensuing across the study period.

Interviews, particularly semi or unstructured interviews rather than a survey, says Brannen (2005), ‘are likely to be used with those in powerful positions in organisations since their perspectives are likely to be (or believed to be) unique within that organisation (p. 10). They can also be more sensitive to complex social phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, informants on the macro level are the political, bureaucratic and caravanning industry stakeholders from national, intra and interstate network communities. They consist of senior level government departmental staff and policy advisors (e.g. Departments of Premier and Cabinet; Planning; Roads and Maritime; and Local Government); industry and consumer association leaders (e.g. Chairpersons and/or Executive Officers of the CRVA, CMCA and MoTOURING); and manufacturing and product suppliers (e.g. Chairpersons and/or Executive Officers of the Recreational Vehicle Manufacturers Australia (RVM).

The opportunity to engage with company executives for inbound vehicle rental agents such as Apollo, Britz, KEA, Juicy and Wicked Campers, as suppliers of end-user freedom camping product was not pursued. Although they were initially represented at the ARRVCF, the choice not to specifically peruse this group was made on the premise that local government stakeholders were already driving a push to have that side of the industry further regulated. At the time of submitting this thesis I am not aware of any significant progress towards further regulation or cooperation between local governments, other RV industry alliances and the inbound rental vehicle agents. Rather, the situation appears to have deteriorated as some local councils, both in NZ and Australia, are now banning Wicked-vans sporting “offensive” slogans from entering council controlled camping grounds (see Bruem 2014; Mackenzie 2016; Si & Gary 2016; Wong 2016). The Qld government also introduced a Bill legislating for enforcement of advertising standards in a further
attempt to force the removal of offensive slogans from rental vans or have the vehicles de-registered. (Preiss 2016)

Informants at the micro level are similarly represented by political, bureaucratic and community (business and resident) interests, but within select LGA case communities. Interviews were conducted with the political head (e.g. Mayor) or their councillor nominee that may have direct committee responsibilities for tourism development; the corresponding bureaucratic head (e.g. General Manager) or their operational nominee, often delegated to the executive level manager responsible for over sighting the work function responsible to freedom camping within the council area; and the corresponding commercial/residents association representative (e.g. Chamber of Commerce and/or Residents Association President) or their equivalent, within the case study community. This latter group was less consistent in their representation with direct referrals instead towards certain business owners e.g. caravan park, hotel, or attraction.

In line with the seminal work of Glaser and Straus (1967) and the adoption of a theoretical sampling approach, commentators discussing interviewing strategies stress that the optimum number of participants varies according to the context of the research – i.e. the nature of the project, the diversity of the issues, the depth of analysis, the homogeneity (or otherwise) of the participants and the values, beliefs and embeddedness of their positions (Dunn 2000). Similarly, Kvale and Flick (2007) stress it is saturation rather than the quantity of the interviews that is most critical to quality research. ‘Although the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level’, Guest et al. (2006, p. 59) lament that in the conduct of quality research ‘it provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes, prior to data collection’ despite most research proposals and ethic approvals requiring estimates of sample size to be declared. Through my proposals I offered a suggestion of 40 interviews cogitative that I was seeking information from a diverse population situated across multi-level disciplines, political perspectives, levels of institutionalisation, and structural rigidity.

In preparing for my interviews a pilot process was undertaken to refine the interview topics and interviewing techniques. This pilot was initially trailed internally with my peers at the School of Business and Tourism at Southern Cross University before I engaged externally with three personally known industry gatekeepers: a “freedom of choice” camping advocate for a national association; the principle policy officer for a state-level caravan parks association; and a local council mayor. While the internal peer review data was discarded for the analysis the external gatekeeper data was included. These first round and purposely targeted engagements formed a
valuable and strategic component to this preparation stage of the research in several ways. First, 
they were used to test for validity of my interview guide, a set of notional themes and discussion 
topics. This interview guide with its probe questions was not prescriptive. However, it did form a 
consistent foundation of each interview. Second, the pilot assisted me to monitor relevance of 
responses and to assess appropriateness of language and terminology. Minor amendments were 
required to the guide and my probing technique, particularly to clarifying terminology. I achieved 
this by asking participants of their understanding of, and experience with, particular practices. This 
technique then lead to informants voicing their own definitions for instance: freedom camping 
versus free-camping; commercial camping versus non-commercial camping; or compliant camping 
versus non-compliant camping. Third, as respected, experienced and knowledgeable leaders in 
their respective fields, I knew these informants to be: a) excellent sounding boards for the broader 
and more holistic picture of freedom camping politics at the macro level; and, b) sufficiently 
embedded in the day-to-day routines of their respective organisations to provide quite nuance 
detail to micro areas of interest. They often resorted to citing and elaborating at length to specific 
examples. This was very evident as these early interviews were much longer than the majority (up 
to two hours and over 20 000 word transcripts) and also when coded, they were richly rewarding 
in producing over half of the 227 first round open codes. This outcome very much aligns to the 
experience of Guest et al. (2006).

Towards the end of each of the interviews I asked informants two ‘furthering’ questions. First, 
from their perspective, was there a glaring topic or aspect (elephants in the room) to any of the 
covered issues that they thought was deserving of attention; and second, would they be prepared 
to nominate further individuals, or suggest particular organisations of interest, that they felt could 
further my investigation. This aspect to the interview process was valuable in identifying new 
informants to continue the initial line of investigation or to probe for intimacies or outliers.

In respect to deeper probing, Bazeley (2013) advises caution. Though specifically referring to the 
eyearly stage of coding rather than interviewing, she suggests it may be natural for one to want to 
challenge each code as it is created, asking: why am I interested in this? However, using grounded 
approach methodology and assuming the data sources are relevant to the topic of investigation, 
she suggests, ‘this question should not be asked to early (e.g. in the first two to three sources). 
This is so that you do not pre-empt possible new ways of thinking about the issues raised’ (p. 143). 
I thus carried this cautioning principle forward into the pilot interview process also. The purpose 
was to glean as much broad data as possible without questioning to deeply for specifics at the 
formative phase of the process.
Post pilot the next three interviews conducted were similarly treated for maximum generation of open codes, opening the possibilities for new angles to old challenges. The leadership positions that each informant held, with each representing diverse and sometimes conflicting political and camping ideologies, proved them as very productive gatekeepers facilitating my further access to varying participants and the critiquing of their different views. In keeping with the spirit of theoretical sampling and constant comparison continuous adjustments to question forming and interview style facilitated maximum informant engagement.

My biggest lesson learned, after listening to the first interview audio-file, was to resist the temptation to directly answer questions that the interviewee asked of me – often mirroring questions they were reluctant to answer if they considered me to be an insider “expert” and that their answers may not fit the “expected” script. Rather, I needed to further engage with the informant, probing differently, inviting them to share their own unique perceptions and understandings rather than merely agree with my probing leads. This highlighted to me the matter of a researcher’s power in relation to participants. The power dynamic extends beyond this example of perceived expertise, to include other factors including cultural sensitivity, appropriateness of questions to a setting, group or person (Bazeley 2013).

Bazeley reminds that the issue of power also impacts on gaining access to data, on the quality of the data, and on the potential for you to misinterpret the data you do get’ (p. 52). As Marshall and Rossman (2006) have suggested, pilot work helps us to understand ourselves as researchers. Even though interview techniques changed across the first interviews, the pilot data generated was still retained for its otherwise rich content. This ‘dry run’ as Bazeley (2013, p. 55) calls it demonstrated that the semi-structured interview format proposed for data collection, along with the topics covered through iterative reference to my interview guide were well received by participants and certainly conducive to generating analysable data relevant to my purposes.

Face-to-face and telephone interviews continued in the ‘batched” manner, generally in groupings of six. Participant engagement was conducted at all times within the context of the participants’ individual circumstances. This facilitated an environment most conducive to positive outcomes considering factors of participant comfort, access, downtime, privacy and noise levels (mindful of recording clarity). Primarily interviews took place at the participant’s workplace or a neutral space (e.g. café, park gazebo and even a shared taxi ride) primarily during business hours. My flexibility, however, was the key to solid participant participation. For example, as the ARRVCF folded before my interview schedule commenced it required me to re-think and act flexibly to accommodate for
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the shifting environment. While this did not cause major inconvenience for the participants, relative to this project, it did cause delay to me and of course additional travel time and cost for me. One-on-one engagement, with independent participants in independent locations was a much bigger task.

Similarly, for two country mayors, night-time telephone interviews were negotiated to account for their particular needs. Both were cattle and cropping station owners working on the land during normal business hours. A further six interviews were re-aligned to coincide with national conferences, national rallies or regional fora that particular targeted participants were attending. By default, this arrangement also necessitated further batching of interviews. On these occasions, through the support of the conference/forum organisers, suitably quite spaces were arranged to conduct the individual interviews.

Within each of the selected local government areas, the meeting spaces of councils were used for such consultations. Adequate and prior arrangements were made through the personal assistant to the CEO of the participating councils or directly with the participant. Again, where ever possible these interviews were aligned with existing scheduled councillor, committee or staff engagements to minimise time/travel costs to them. Refreshments are a normal inclusion to many local government and industry sponsored functions thus there was no requirement for me to provide such on the interview occasions. Due to my previous working history in local government and regional tourism I am very familiar with liaison processes and protocols required through council and association executive officers to facilitate these meetings. Additionally, awareness of the pecuniary interests and gift policies of local government suggested that offering incentives for informant participation was not appropriate. None were requested or made and no unusual or unexpected circumstances arose that caused this part of the project any issue.

Interviews were digitally recorded after obtaining the informant’s informed consent. While most informants were happy to sign the consent form (see Appendix 2.5 – De-identified record of consent form), others, after direct conversation simply chose to verbalise their consent at the beginning of the recorded interview. In the single circumstances where a participant was not comfortable with me digitally recording, I reverted to observation and note-taking only (see Jenkins 1996) as they did consent otherwise to full engagement in the research.

The interviews began with preliminary introductions before I asked participants to tell their story. The story of their experiences with freedom camping within their immediate professional role and
also if this spilled over into their personal lives. An opening approach, with a “tell me” or “how” question was used to engage the interviewee in conversation style. This type of question cannot be answered with a yes or no answer, hence responses are more likely to be free of my bias (Perry 1998). Dick (1990, p. 9) also says, ‘this is your warranty that the answers came from the respondent and did not arise simply because your questions created a self-fulfilling prophecy’

Topics and issue were approached, raised, or returned to, in differing orders during each interview with the guide serving as a useful tracking tool. It supported me to stay focused on the informant while listening, prompting and eliciting for new information. The guide also facilitated the generation of a field journal with content that linked directly back to my research objectives. By way of example, hand written notes were placed directly against interest points on the interview guide as they were raised. These allowed me to easily seek confirmation, reinforcement or query distortion from topics under conversation and/or those previously discussed with other informants. Interview audio recordings were transferred to my laptop and latter transcribed using Express Scribe software. Transcripts were verbatim and time-stamped.

2.4.4 Data interpretation, member checking and public feedback

At subsequent intervals throughout the data collection and analysis (e.g. attendance at meetings and post the interviews) findings were shared wherever possible with participants in a reflective manner. This extended the conversation opportunity with participants (Dredge & Hales 2012; Kieser & Leiner 2012) enabling further clarification of elements in line with the originally articulated research objectives and the emerging categories, themes and theories.

Transcriptions were offered to the interviewee for verification and before detailed open coding began. This member checking ensures the data is truly reflected by the researcher (Kumar 2011). Informants had the opportunity to survey the record for accuracy, from their perspective. This mutual exchange is a recognised process for member checking or more specifically, my interpretation of the recording through transcription. Despite the sensitivities around freedom camping I did not find the interviewees to be particularly interested to receive the transcripts. Certainly they were not demanding of them. Of those that did specifically seek them for their personal record, none made any further request for errors to be rectified or complete deletions to issues that may have been sensitive to them. This enhanced my confidence that informants were being truthful with me and not attempting to lead or second guess the script.
Further, to member check for micro level detail I promoted ongoing dialogue with community representatives. I offered to attend association, chamber, and council or committee meetings to provide and seek two-way information sharing about the project and to continuously observe and note the progress of freedom camping activity within their respective LG communities. Four community engagements were attended in NSW upon invitation from respective groups. First, with Byron Shire Council through a sub-committee set up at the general manager’s request to investigate camping options for the Shire. Second, a sub-branch of the North Coast CCIAAs requested my input to a submission to Tweed Shire Council. This sought to inform Council of the Association’s perceptions to the community value of caravan parks to the Shire. Third, the North Coast Destination Network (Regional Tourism Organisation representing 21 LGAs between Gosford and Tweed Heads in New South Wales) sought my attendance and contribution to a taskforce. This was commissioned to develop guidelines for local governments in managing the freedom camping phenomenon in their collective region. Finally, I was invited by the Casino Chamber of Commerce and Industry to advise them on the “realities and pitfalls” of becoming an RV Friendly Town. Each of these community engagements provided excellent opportunity to further observe participants from a wide range of institutions and ideological persuasion within their day-to-day (naturalistic) environments.

At a macro level, additional private meetings were commonly held with the national executives of CIAA and CMCA at their respective Qld and NSW locations. Further, attendance through personal invitation was to three public consultation sessions hosted by the Qld government through their state-wide review of camping options and rest areas. Supplementary dissemination of research progress and outputs also occurred through the publication of three refereed journal articles that emanated from my broad caravan and camping interests. These triggered successive rounds of media interest. This resulted in over 20 radio and television interviews and a similar number of print and social media references. Each of these events served to feed material directly back to participants, and indirectly to the wider public audience. The public focus demonstrates the currency of the camping conversations and the undercurrents within. These recursive interactions also produced further informant interview candidates as new themes developed. Also, as new players were stimulated to enter the scene. Additionally, the progressive release of material ensured timeliness of information sharing and currency with discourse. This technique supports the principles of Mode 2 knowledge-making practices (Gibbons et al. 1994; Nowotny et al. 2001) through continued, interested and participatory engagement with stakeholders throughout the research process.
2.4.5 Data analysis

In a grounded approach the analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data is collected. Analysis is necessary from the start because it is used to direct the next stage in the process, the next observation or the next interview, incorporating all seemingly pertinent materials and issues. This procedure allows the research process to capture all potentially relevant aspects of the topic as soon as they are perceived (Corbin & Strauss 2008; Dick 2000; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Haig (1995) proposes that the general goal of grounded research is to construct theories in order to understand phenomena. ‘A good grounded theory is one that is: (1) inductively derived from data; (2) subjected to theoretical elaboration; and (3), judged adequate to its domain with respect to a number of evaluative criteria’ (pp. 1-2); each being sound output from rigorously conducted qualitative data analysis. Seidel (1998) tenders a three step process for such analysis: noticing, collecting and thinking (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7 - The qualitative data analysis process](image)

Figure 7 - The qualitative data analysis process
Source: Seidel 1998, p.2

This trilogy, starting with noticing things, means making observations, gathering documents, recording interviews or taking field notes for example. These actions produce a record of the things you have noticed. Once you have produced the record, Seidel says, by reading the record your attention is then directed towards the noticing of interesting things within the record. ‘As you notice things in the record you name, or “code” them’ (pp. 3, Italic in original). Post interview and before coding in earnest, I adopted a simple, but systematic thematic approach focusing on variable rather than case orientation data. This procedure as described by Babbie (2010), supported me to immediately record my reflections, i.e. What just went on? What are my early thoughts about the interview content? Is there any new or abstract ideas being presented here? Why might these be showing up? What is it about this participant’s context or experiences that
supports the common or unique position? Such reflections were recorded in memos soon after the interview, or in some instances even during the course of the interview directly onto the interview guide.

Within the design of my personalised interview guide (i.e. I had an individual guide for every interview) there was an area for “General Notes”, additional to the margins at individual “prompt” questions. These margins and the general notes section were used to record thought, leads and further referrals as they came to hand or mind. The field notes, along with the memos and recorded reflections, later on, were used to corroborate categories and themed patterns (Veal 2005) from the transcribed data that were generated from the matching personal interview. The necessity to sometimes “batch” the interviews and delay deep analysis of transcripts highlighted the importance of the general, margin and reflective notes. They served me well as an intermediate and quick analysis providing sufficient direction finding to the following interviews.

This approach certainly facilitated excellent interview progress, rich data collection and then extensive open codes which supported themed categories. These began to emerge after analysis of just 10 transcripts. This early revealing from the data supports Guest et al. (2006, p. 59) who found that ‘saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews, although basic elements for meta-themes were present as early as six interviews’ reinforcing people perpetuate routine (Charmaz & Gibbs 2013). The inductive approach to this analysis allowed the data to inform the coding which underpins the themes supporting them in their evolutionary forms (Braun & Clarke 2006). Charmaz (2013; 2006) calls this the constructivist view. Coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytical preconceptions, she says, is the key to inductive analysis.

Braun and Clark (2006) warn however, that coding does not take place in an epistemological vacuum – researcher’s cannot free themselves of their theoretical and epistemological commitments. In support, Charmaz (2013) urges us to remain fluid and not overly prescriptive in our processes, in our thinking, in our analysis and in our imaging of the story that unfolds. Codes and coding are only one part of the process of qualitative analysis. They cannot exist in isolation. ‘The codes must be used to link or test for associated ideas’ (Bazeley 2013, p. 154). They will need to become connected in different ways in order to build a metanarrative, a meaningful word picture, or a theory as one constantly returns to the data, looks for doing words and focuses on actions (Charmaz & Gibbs 2013). Social constructionism recognises that things change over time and context with new relationships forming, new meaning given and new power bestowed in the
form of symbolic interactionism (see Blumer 1969) (see also Chapter 2 – Conceptual framework in understanding the “other” of caravanning). Memoing my thoughts, reflecting on the process, and questioning the outcomes at various steps along the way was the key for my analysis progress.

2.4.6 **NVivo as a tool for analysis – coding and theme development**

NVivo software was employed as a data management and analysis assistance tool. Time-stamped transcripts allowed me, within NVivo, to code simultaneous to listening, and re-listening, to the individual interview audio-files. I found this method very useful in checking for nuances within conversation that are not so apparent when coding from text transcripts alone. Coding enables the purposeful manipulation and integration of the data – unbundling, sifting, sorting, identifying and querying – plus the all-important locating, repacking and managing data (Bazeley 2013). ‘It is not a mechanistic, data reduction process, but rather one designed to stimulate and facilitate analysis’ (p. 125). Richards (2009) says coding is more about data retention than data reduction. The code is simply a label or name given to a passage, sentence, phrase or word based on the researcher’s understanding of what that passage is about. Within NVivo, the label is then used to both *represent* and to *access* that passage along with other data that are the same or similar or different, depending on the query run and the type of analysis sought (Bazeley 2013).

Querying is a search function similar to those available in other text based programs. Using the processing power of the NVivo software, it simply allowed me to review codes through discrete search or in question form via a matrix search. Coding, Bazeley says, ‘is used to manage (keep track of) your data; build ideas from your data; and, facilitate asking questions of your data (p. 127). For example, I could interrogate my data as such: Do local government mayors express different or similar attitudes towards freedom campers, than those of their operational staff? Either search function would give immediate access to and retrieval of all the code data represented by that question.

Bazeley suggests that coding typically moves through two distinct stages: first-level coding serves to identify and label and is referred to as open coding; second-level coding serves to refine and interpret data to develop more analytical categories or clusters, often referred to as focused coding. Unlike the open coding that seeks to gain maximum breath and a face-value sense of “what’s going on here”, focused coding involves interpretation of data within their context. It is at this stage, Bazeley (2013, p. 128) argues, ‘the codes give meaning to data’. According to Maxwell and Miller (2008, p. 469) ‘coding assists the researcher to break out of an “imprisonment in the story” to see new connections and alternate ways of framing and interpreting a text or situation’.
Coding occurs in a cylindrical and recursive process. Similarly, as one moves from data to description to analysis and back to data, the understandings and relationships that occur form an iterative and evolving process.

Some of the relationships forming will be worth pursuing, leading to ‘exciting and creative moments of intellectual work’ (Clarke 2009, p. 219); others will not. The codes, categories and themes are our own creations, in that we identify and select them ourselves – they are not set in stone, but instead, tactical organising principles (Bazeley 2013; Coffey & Atkinson 1996). Likewise, it is not the software (NVivo) that does the analysis - it is the researcher. The codes are the tools to think with. They can be expanded, changed, or in the “dying category” case point above, scraped altogether as our ideas either develop through repeated interactions with the data or simply become empty leads (Coffey & Atkinson 1996).

The transcripts were initially open coded to show patterns in semantic content only, rather than delving deeper for latent meaning (Braun & Clarke 2006). While it was the direct observations, written words only, that were coded, inevitably it was my own interpretation or construction of what was said and done by the participant that determined the final assignment of different passages to sometimes, multiple codes. I must admit to some level, well a high level actually, of anxiety about identifying the intended meaning of an interviewee’s words. In response to this recognised dilemma for novice researchers Strauss (1987) observed:

> The aim of coding is to open up the inquiry. Every interpretation at this point is tentative. In a genuine sense, the analyst is not primarily concerned with this particular document, but for what it can do to further the next steps of the inquiry. Whatever is wrong in interpreting those lines and words will eventually be cancelled out through latter steps of the inquiry. Concepts will then work or not work, distinctions will be useful or not useful – or modified, and so forth (p. 29).

At this beginning level of coding, and only after analysis of just a dozen transcripts (2 x batches of three and 1 x batch of six), 227 open codes had been labelled and described in NVivo. Early groupings of ideas and related categories also began to show. To further explore these emerging categories selective coding was then done on a further six interview transcripts, continuing the “batching” concept, to flesh out, or delve deeper, only into the individual stories (categories) that were developing. This level of thematic analysis brought a more insightful understanding of variable nuances presented and how different organisations/position holders/local governments are treating and dealing with contextual, relational, and political challenges of freedom camping.
Chapter 2: Methodology

As 31 categories had developed stable form, and they were comprehensively described by their independent though not mutually exclusive codes, there was little point in perusing additional information simply to add to the existing categories. Instead, it was necessary to peruse variance in informants to try and identify corroborating or opposing data. Using the NVivo word/phrase search function a further “batch” of six interview were word scanned for identification of relevant texts with ‘only those passages perused in more detail’ (Bazeley 2013, p. 153). Bazeley continues the justification for this approach as follows:

Once a category started taking shape, and the process of refinement was working, further coding was contained only to that data which provide a clear instance of the category, rather than a vague allusion to it. A helpful question to ask in this process is whether you would want to find this passage of text each time you need to retrieve and review anything you know about this category (p. 154).

This was a particularly important consideration as I already had a large amount of data relating to particular categories. Charmaz (2013) encourages researchers to be imaginative – to take creative leaps, tear things apart and put them together again in new ways. Name, merge and rename codes to reflect the properties that they carry and the conditions under which they emerge. She refers to focused coding as a third level or the formative stage to theory development. Here I reverted to hand drawn mind maps to further develop and display the linkages and relationships between the many categories (see Appendix 2.6 - The path to power: emergent themes from data codes).

A total of 37 interviews were recorded, transcribed, read and all of them listened too on more than one occasion. After iteratively coding (open, selective, and focused) of just 18 interview transcripts, supplemented through several literatures and observations, particularly at camping fora/consolations, saturation of categories was imminent. To confirm my hunch, an audio screen of a further batch of six random transcripts was carried out. This reveal did not bear any new leads or significant outliers. With only interesting but minimal incremental learning now apparent, saturation sufficiency (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was declared at 24 interviews. Four strong themes had emerged. These were: ideology chasms; conflicting inter-personal values and legislations; power relationships; and, a vision of the future. The intimate linkages between these four themes are further teased out through the following chapters of the thesis.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Guidelines from the Australian Government National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) were followed during this study. In essence, the researcher’s respect for participants is central to the research process to avoid them of any intentional or unintentional
harm. Four categories of potential harm in research, as identified by Jennings (2010) are: physical, psychological, legal and other. The latter, by example, may arise as negative repercussions to the wider society as a result of the research finding. The study was deemed to be of low or negligible risk with participants deemed to not be vulnerable with the identified categories. Pseudonyms were used through out to further protect participant identities. This study was conducted under Southern Cross University Ethics Approval - Notification Number ECN 13-038. (See Appendix 2.7 – Ethic approval notification).

2.6 Conclusion

This Chapter sets out the rational for the research approach, the path and proceedings undertaken to achieve the aim and objectives of the thesis. The ‘common sense practice for change orientated approach’ (Denscombe 2008, p. 274) in no way distracts from or avoids the rigour of the solid philosophical grounding and principled methodological assumptions of pragmatism as its underpinning foundations. Appendix 2 contains further methodology support materials.

There are always advantages and disadvantages to any research approach adopted. The multi-methods path taken within this thesis has yielded rich and rewarding insights that assists in understanding of the “other” in planning and policy, theory and praxis for freedom camping. The grounded case study approach combines an array of historical and contextual data types and lends itself to flexible and concurrent methods of analysis. Drawing from fragmented datasets and multiple actors allowed me to present a story of past structures, embedded values and beliefs plus the contemporary thinking of those closest to the political action. Such depth of understanding of the freedom camping phenomenon is unlikely to have occurred using just one data type or one analytical approach. However, the drawback to this approach is that very large amounts of data are quickly amassed and time is required to interpret and judge its accuracy and reliability. In the contested space of freedom camping policy, conflicting evidence voluntarily provided under an “authoritative” banner was very common. Subsequently, the method was logistically complex and time-consuming with the output limited to the information available to me, the knowledge of my participants, and finally to my own interpretation of their stories.
Chapter 3: Freedom camping in the taxonomy of caravanning

3.1 Introduction

There is considerable international debate around freedom camping and not least its symbiotic relationship to caravanning as a lifestyle: nomadic urbanism (Brooker & Joppe 2013; Caldicott et al. 2017b; Caldicott et al. 2014b; Hardy et al. 2013b; Peters 2003; Peters 2010; Simpson 2008; The Portugal News 2014; The Standard 2013; Whitby Gazette 2015). To the uninitiated, caravanning may appear a homogeneous and mundane activity (Southerton et al. 2003). However, they also suggest that deeper scrutiny reveals differentiated sets of cultural ideas, values and practices among caravanners, at both micro (self) and macro (other) levels. These influence wider patterns of social life distinguishing caravanners between their familiar “selves” and between themselves and unfamiliar “others” (Blumer 1969; Giddens 1991; Urry 1990). Such distinctions fuel conflicts and (dis)positional power struggles within national through to local caravanning communities as markets diversify and interest groups, opposed in camping-rights ideology, contest the position of the “other”. These experiences are mirrored in a range of international settings not least New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom, Central Europe, Scandinavia and Australia.

This chapter addresses the first thesis objective providing a foundational platform for studying the politics of present-day freedom camping. It presents a taxonomy of contemporary caravanning in order to aid understanding of the complex networks which subsequently characterise freedom camping both domestically and internationally. Each network plays a role in shaping freedom camping experiences, political debate and camping policy within a tangle of associated industry jargon. The following section (3.2) critically examines how inconsistent RV jargon inhibits the freedom camping planning and policy debate about caravanning in public places. Section 3.3 introduces a conceptual framework with underpinning foundations for understanding the “other” of caravanning – other caravanners and others stakeholders relating to caravanning – to guide a taxonomy. Section 3.4 explains the taxonomy offering labels for market segments within pre-trip determiners, before camping styles and motivations are introduced. Under an umbrella of Stakeholders and Policy, an international freedom camping discourse introduces a camper continuum from hard core commercial camping to hard core freedom camping proposed through the site typology. The section 3.5 provides a discussion of the practices of freedom camping by drawing on theories of power. Section 3.6 is a concluding summary.
3.2 Industry jargon

The caravan industry’s own language, the jargon common to caravanning interests, conflates prejudices, suspicions, distrust and agenda setting within the planning and policy arena for freedom camping. Acknowledged by the industry (CIAA 2014; Jones 2016a), the jargon is not void of its own significant definitional confusion. I contend that the jargon is contributing to the freedom camping planning and policy melee. Notwithstanding the importance of jargon in social, political and scientific discourses, Chaves Alves and de Albuquerque (2010) tackle the issue of common, loosely accepted, but inconsistently used terminology, when discussing “ethno-science”. They say such common practice simply leads to ‘an amalgamation of poorly-defined terms, establishment of terms that are confused and often ambiguous, and a parallel movement of a veritable “inflation” of the literature’ (p. 67). It need not be terms of a highly technical nature or specific to a unique occupation, topic, or discipline that come into such miss-use. Chaves Alves and de Albuquerque claim ‘terms such as “traditional knowledge” or “local communities” are so well incorporated into our speech, by force of habit, that they lack any critical evaluation or precise explanation of the understanding implied by these words which we have used in our publications’ (p. 67).

My approach herein, guided by Chaves Alves and de Albuquerque (2010), adopts the principles of clarity and specificity, in an effort to demystify the jargon of caravanning through six intersecting means. First, through a glossary of terms with description and discourse (Appendix 1.1); second, description and discourse of recreational vehicle (RV) styles (Appendix 1.2); third, of alternate international and domestic terms for freedom camping (Appendix 1.3); fourth, of commercial camping spaces (Appendix 1.4); fifth, of camping market segments (Appendix 1.5); and finally, the taxonomy of caravanning (this Chapter). These six tools provide the reader with opportunity to gain clarity of the terms used throughout this thesis providing contextual meaning additional to promoting common acceptance among stakeholders; specifically camping consumers, practitioners, policy makers and academics.

Caravanning jargon, as confusing and disputed as it is within the industry, is also not well understood, or lacking agreement, by government bureaucrats and policy makers. Jargon is used by lobbies selectively promoting vested interests through sought-after planning and policy decisions. Sometimes it is used simply to fuel further emotive conversation and political division (see City of Ballarat 2014; City of Greater Geraldton 2014; Shire of Esperance 2014). At other times it is inserted into legislative instruments without adequate consideration to its consequences. For
example, the Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA 2014) legitimately challenged the common phrase “self-contained” when describing recreational vehicles. They did this through their formal submission to the Western Australian Government’s consultation paper – Proposal for Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Legislation. CIAA argued ‘the introduction into common language of a term [self-contained] which is known to generate significant confusion is irresponsible and even dangerous, particularly where there is no proposed definition of the term’ (p. 6). Similarly, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA 2014) submitted that for constancy and clarity ‘definitions should be consistent across a range of legislation and statutory instruments including the planning definitions’. They cited several examples of confusion at first, the infrastructure level: Holiday-Park vs Transit-Park vs Nature-Park and then Ancillary-Accommodation; at second, the market level: Holidaymaker vs Traveller; and third, at the level of vehicle classification (RV type): Campervan vs Camp-vehicle.

The Western Australian Caravan Industry Association (CIAWA), representing 145 caravan parks and 100 trade members, reports ‘widespread lack of understanding and disparity of interpretation of the Act[s] and Regulations by local authorities’ (CIAWA 2014, p. 5). This is exacerbated when authorities are confronted by reviews of multiple acts and overlapping proposals. Such was the situation in WA in 2013/14 with concurrent reviews of the Nature-Based Park Guidelines for Developers and Local Government; the Residential Parks (Long-Stay Tenant) Act 2006 and the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995. Additionally, the lack of definitional clarity within each ‘all delivers contradictory messages for operators’ (CIAWA 2014, p. 5).

The absence of commonly accepted, although proliferation of, definitions for much of the caravanning jargon is a barrier to dialogue between RV political interests and thus the advancement of caravanning planning and policy and infrastructure in Australia (Caldicott et al. 2014b). The juxtaposition is that it provides fertile ground to address Southerton et al’s (2003, p. 2) call for ‘further theoretical analysis and empirical investigation into issues of caravanning’. Clarifying any “wickedness” of jargon is a foundational opportunity for practical and theoretical advancement of the caravanning literature broadly, but particularly contributing to the thin tourism planning and policy streams. Rittel and Webber (1973) suggest planning, by ‘wicked’ design, ‘is an argumentative process in the course of which an image of the problem and of the solution emerges gradually among the participants as a product of incessant judgement, subjected to critical argument’ (p. 162). Moving beyond the glossaries and appendices, the next section introduces a conceptual framework to aid understanding of the “other” in caravanning and further to inform a taxonomy of caravanning.
3.3 Conceptual framework: understanding the “other” in caravanning

There is strong consumer demand for caravanning in Australia with total RV registrations in 2016 exceeding half-a-million units and manufacturing exceeding 20,000 units for the fifth year running (CIAA 2015c, 2015g, 2016a, 2016c; Cropp 2016a; Glassey 2016). The phenomenal growth is driving new business opportunities for caravan manufacturing and commercial caravan parks (Cropp 2016a; Glassey 2016). At the same time, camping markets are diversifying with increasing numbers of RVers preferring to stay away from commercial caravan parks, instead opting to freedom camp (Caldicott et al. 2014b; Tourism Research Australia 2016a, 2016c). Acknowledging the varied international policy settings on freedom camping (see International comparisons – later in this Chapter), I accept Southerton et al’s (2003) challenge to the considerable potential for further empirical investigation of caravanning. I also accept the voices of my participants who tell stories of experience based around notions of power - freedom and control, observation and being observed, recreational expertise and mobile infrastructure, technology and e-communication, and policy and politics. In listening to these stories I associated elements of Southerton et al. (2003) experiential typology, the multi-dimensional recreational constructs of Bryan (1977) and Urry’s (2003) networked sociality to operationalise a taxonomy of caravanning within the broader conceptualisations of gaze theory and social interactionism (Blumer 1969; Foucault 1975; Urry 1990) (Figure 8).

The rationale behind these choices in foundational theory lie in the connection between tourism, power, time, space and sector as acknowledged by John Urry (2002) in discussing the consequences of being the subject of the gaze (Church & Coles 2007a). Urry sought to link ‘tourism to the emergence of disciplining norms and othering in capital society’ (p. 277). He also notes that planning and policy outcomes will ‘depend upon various determinants such as the relations of power within the “host” community, the time-space characteristics of visitors and the kinds of gaze involved’ (Urry 2002, p. 151). Church and Coles (2007a) also reinforce how many faces of power manifest in tourism. Even though tourism conglomerates [commercial operators, associations or governments] are ‘often not visibly present in the material sites of tourism [freedom camping] their use of management systems, business networks, signs, symbols and infrastructures of tourism allows them to have a major influence on the use of “distant” sites’ (p. 277).
Power is central in any critical research aiming to contest the nature of reality as one and shared and based on immutable truths (Church & Coles 2007b; Tribe 2007). Power plays an important role in tourism, for instance in state regulation, the effects of tourism, and tourists’ social relationships both at home and away (Coles & Church 2007b; Kannisto 2014). Through her study, *Global Nomads – Challenges of Mobility in the Sedentary World*, Kannisto (2014) contends ‘alternative lifechoices such as global nomads are never unproblematic from the point of the individuals themselves, people around them, or society as a whole’ (p. 4). They involve a strong agency that may go against dominant models of thinking. ‘From this perspective, questions of power – how power is constitutive of global nomads’ subjectivities, how other people and societies use power over them, and how they themselves facilitate power – become essential’ (Kannisto 2014, p.4).
The tourist gaze (Urry 1990) has its roots in Jeremy Bentham’s late eighteenth Century panopticon, a central guard tower construction popularised by the Foucauldian concepts of the *le regard* (the gaze). First, it stems from the institutional gaze born out of his book - *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) and second, from the governing gaze based on a later book - *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Socially constructed and systematized, the institutional or governing gaze is ‘regarded as a disciplinary gaze, including judgement and the potential for chastisement’ (Holloway et al. 2011, p. 237). Thus it has a ‘dominant mechanism for the exercise of power’ (p. 237) and consequently is sometimes referred as the ‘magisterial’ gaze (Holinshead 1999, p. 10). Based on this disciplinary notion ‘the mechanism of surveillance, via a networked system of relations’ Foucault (1975, p. 176) posits ‘impacts on the actions and behaviours of the self’. McLaren (2002, p. 107) affirms if someone believes it possible that they are being watched, ‘as if they are under surveillance’, they may choose to adjust their behaviours in accordance to the perceived power of the gaze. Foucault’s approach, according to Gaventa (2003) is ‘to see power as an everyday, socialised and embodied phenomenon ... particularly as norms become so embedded as to be beyond our perception – causing us to discipline ourselves without any wilful coercion from others’.

As an object of gaze, the tourist is no longer only a spectator of their touring environment. They are themselves subject of “other” mutual (Maoz 2006) and intra-tourist (Holloway et al. 2011) gazes often arbitrated through the production and consumption of symbols relating to the tourist’s identity. Identities are shaped or directed both by ‘institutions and practices of commercialised tourism’ (MacCannell & MacCannell 2001, p. 35) and the ‘social interactions between visitors during travel’ (Harris 2014, p. 11). Holloway et al. (2011) reinforce, that in tourism ‘the gaze is usually authorised and authenticated by routine word-of-mouth [WOM] social interaction with other, similarly minded, tourists’ (p. 248). However, WOM today extends to eWOM through social media platforms and user-generated web content. Tourists’ stories and opinions are uploaded to e-platforms and instantly disseminated around the world. Tourists share photos, videos, audio and text transmissions of their travel experiences in real-time (Mansfeldt et al. 2008; Triantafillidou & Siomkos 2013). This often triggers responses from the recipients promoting the eWOM exchange. Additionally, several authors (Jenkins et al. 2014; Johannessen et al. 2016; Macintosh et al. 2005; Wattal et al. 2010) note, as society has become increasingly digitised governments too are turning to a number of eParticipation planning and policy programs in attempts to boost democratic interest in decision making. Sæbø et al. (2008, p. 403) define eParticipation as ‘a set of technology-facilitated participatory processes, both deliberative and decision orientated’ and Johannessen et al. (2016, p. 215) say such ‘participation is understood as joining in some form of discussion, activity or decision making’.

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Consequently, tourism, caravanning and freedom camping are each socially constructed concepts of increasingly signposted experiences. They involve ‘discerned sets of cultural ideas, values and practices’ (Southerton et al. 2003, p. 2), ‘social connectedness through networks’ (Urry 2003, p. 157), ‘degrees of self-reliance and self-sufficiency through specialised skills and tools’ (Bryan 1977, p. 175), and ‘specialisation of place’ (Urry 1992, p. 139). I contend specialisation extends to the symbolism of objects and behaviours (artefacts, symbols, signposts and technologies) that form lines of demarcations between tourists’ identities (see Appendix 1). Distinctions, or identifying characteristics, may be self-assigned or assigned by other affected stakeholders (Blumer 1969) such as peers, media, commercial marketers, governing agencies, governments, community hosts and non-participating public. The next section presents a taxonomy of caravanning conceptually framed by gaze theory within identifying determinants for RVers at “self” (micro) and “other” (macro) levels.

3.4 Taxonomy of caravanning: identifying determinants of RVers

Within the taxonomy (Figure 9) macro identifiers are landscape elements (physical, visual, political) from which “other” travellers and agents gaze. The micro “self” is determined by the expectations and attitudes of the “other”. Micro conceptualises the gaze of “others” to “self” as “I”. Hence “I” as an individual is a social construction in response to the “other” promoting the gaze as an instrument of power; of social control. The gaze is a mechanism for society to exercise control in the conduct of individuals and institutions. The generalised “other” represents an organised and sweeping attitude of a social group, institution or society. The generalised “self” is how individuals define their behaviours with reference to the generalised attitude of the social group of which they belong (Blumer 1969; Foucault 1975; Urry 1990), giving each their own agency.

I argue further that micro and macro identity distinctions also extend the agency of the RV (vehicle) to encompass the lifestyle and social networks (Urry 2003) of the RVers - i.e. their physical connection through the mobility of the RV and further, a nebulous connection through social
Figure 9 - Taxonomy of caravanning: identifying determinants  (Source: Author)
networks (Gossling et al. 2016). Connections may be across long distances or just across the campsite. Bryan’s (1977) recreation specialisation theory (RST) suggests a continuum of leisure pursuit and behaviour is reflected through the equipment used, skill level of individuals and activity setting preference. RST ‘predicts that individuals will differ their physical management and social setting preferences’ based on ‘a range of behavioural, cognitive and affective dimensions’ (Bryan 1977, p. 174). As displayed through Figure 9 these dimensions extend to the psychological attachment individuals form with their chosen recreational activity (see pre-trip determinants), the individuals’ contextual situation (see trip style and destination motivators) and also their use of the RV in given private and public spaces (see site typology). These four underpinning dimensions of the taxonomy are further discussed below.

3.4.1 Pre-trip determiners

Research in Australia, United Kingdom and the United States dismisses contentions of caravanning being homogenous and mundane (Cridland 2008; Hardy et al. 2013a; Ming 1997) thus calling for a new imaging (Morgan & Pritchard 1998). Green’s (1978) US study revealed that the ‘different types of vehicles that RVers use lend themselves to styles or modes of travel that are distinctive enough to identify and study separately’ (p. 432). Southerton et al. (2003) asserts through their English study that ‘deeper scrutiny [of caravanning] reveals an internally differentiated set of cultural ideas, values and practices related to wider patterns of social life’ (p. 2) among, and by, caravanners. Further, ‘it is the way that caravanning is done, and the positions taken with respect to the valuing of novelty or routine; security and anxiety; privacy and sociability; which caravanners refer to in distinguishing between themselves and others’ (p. 2).

To the “other”, other caravanners, non-caravanners, planners, environmentalists and commercial caravan park operators for instance, freedom camping is representing a transitioning away from normative modes of camping. This is reinforcing a polarisation of the freedom camping debate (Hadfield 2015). Additionally, non-caravanners (“others”) can view caravanners (“self”) as representing a ‘uniformly problematic population crawling along [English] country lanes and despoiling areas of outstanding natural beauty’ (Southerton et al. 2003, p. 2). These same sentiments are reflected within the Australian caravanning scene. For example, outrage is directed both to slow moving grey nomad caravanners that some argue are too old to drive (Caravan and Motorhome on Tour 2015a) clogging national highways (Flint 2015; McGuire 2015) analogous with cholesterol blocking arteries (Syvret 2015); and, to anti-social and environmental misconduct by younger vanpackers at some beaches (Gleeson 2014; Hansen 2015; McElroy 2016). The latter is often met with hostility, with locals yelling and telling them to move on (Woolley 2015).
Chapter 3: Freedom camping in the taxonomy of caravanning

The complexities of RVer identity (see Figure 9 - Identification) in the materially entangled world of caravanning and by default freedom camping is often symbolised through the home on their back; their motorhome or trailing van. The self and peer identity assigned to RVers may be interpreted differently by those inside RV circles, those practicing caravanning to those on the outside, those servicing the RV industry and those as observers only. They each often have different vested interests with diverse freedom camping policy perspectives. As Southerton et al. (2003) suggest, the ‘experience of caravanning is not simply defined and constituted by the caravan, as a stand-alone object in its own right. Much depends on the way in which it is used and the context into which it is situated and positioned’ (p. 2). Common-law, property rights, or moral principles are often used by contesting parties exercising power to argue the merits to their differing perspectives (Church & Ravenscroft 2007). Southerton et al., (2003, p. 3) suggest to consider a ‘study of recreational caravanning [freedom camping] as simply a mundane study of tourism, without considering caravanning as a cultural practice, encompassing several social worlds would be misleading’. On the one hand, the caravan waxes and wanes between ‘playing a large or only an incidental part’ on RVers’ leisure experiences as transport. On the other hand, the leisure routines of RVers are ‘intractably linked to domestic provisioning’ (p. 3).

This concept of domesticity is further explored by Beilharz and Supki (2009) who raise themes like freedom, mobility, escape and utopia back-dropped by images of domesticity on wheels. Domesticity infers duration with caravanners both peer-identified and self-identifying as short, medium and long-termers based on their length of trip (see Pre-trip determiners at Figure 9). Trip duration, one that supports the desired caravanning experience, is generally planned well before commencement of travel. Duration also contributes to the classification of neo-tribal (Maffesoli 1995) market segments; those fluid groupings of people self or peer-identified as grey nomads, couples, solos and vanpackers for example. Neo-tribalism is divergent to cultural tribalism. In the latter one is born into and retains scripted position to traditions validated as historical (McKerron 2003) and are more-or-less stable (Kellner 1992). On the contrary, modern travellers as RVing neo-tribes have meaningful connection through common interests, similar lifestyles, rituals and language only while ever they choose to be among or identify with such fluctuating compatriots (Bennett 1999).

### 3.4.2 Trip style indicators

Neo-tribal demographics coupled with trip duration assists to identify trip style and subsequently the appropriate vehicle selection (see Figure 9 - Vehicle selection). Aspects of vehicle self-sufficiency and self-containment contribute to levels of traveller identity through vehicle agency.
Vehicle level of dependence (or independence) from fixed hooked-up services for the provision of water and electricity and of waste storage is critical in the pre-trip planning and vehicle selection decision making. RVs range in agency from minimalist non-self-contained roof-top tents through various campervan and trailer configurations to luxury fully self-contained caravans and motorhomes (see Trip style at Figure 9 and Appendix 1.2 – Recreation Vehicles (RV) styles). The RV’s agency contributes to the overall camping experience in several ways irrespective of camp site choice; from freedom to commercial, nationally or internationally.

Through a study of forest camper site choice selection in the USA, McFarlane (2004) describes the influences that support a redistribution of campers on the landscape through their ‘degree of self-reliance and decreased dependence on facilities and services’ (p. 310). She explains that campers [caravanners] ‘who have acquired levels of specialisation such that they are no longer dependent on the facilities and services offered at the provincial park setting may be starting to venture into less developed PRA [Provisional Recreational Area] sites’ (p. 320). Subsequently, the agency of the RV through make and model impacts destination access via infrastructure, (on-road vs off-road) and to locational sites (from the purpose designed to those designed for entirely other purposes). As such, vehicle agency has influence with respect to destinations, locations, public places and leisure spaces. First, destinations (urban, coastal and remote) which have appropriate sites (commercial and freedom) and appropriate access (sealed roads and unsealed roads) are attractive to a wider range of the RV market than destinations that are constrained in their product offering. Second, the vehicle’s agency contributes to occupant capacity and the comfort levels for occupants matched to their desired experience. Third, vehicle agency contributes to the social engagement of RVers with “others” through determination of geographical access, site selection, and other evaluative cues which further reflect RVer identity. Vehicle selection generally, and make and model specifically, in-turn impact destination motivators of sociability and site choice.

3.4.3 Destination motivators

Destination motivators are influenced by social factors and site choice, each with independent characteristics though acting in symbiotic ways (See Figure 9 - Social factors and Site choice). Each influences or is influenced by vehicle selection. The vehicle can deliberately promote sociability choice (introvert or extrovert) but can also act as a constraint if different levels of sociability are desired but the vehicle selection (purposeful choice or incidental pre-trip ownership) limits geographic access to such supportive sites. For example, the camaraderie of a discrete off-road, fire-side, bush camp may not be accessible when driving a 30ft A-Class motorhome but be fully accessible to occupants of an off-road camper trailer.
The vehicle serves two purposes around social factors. First, the RV creates a sense of identity with one or more forms of the multiple caravan and camping neo-tribes (e.g. Vanpackers, families or grey nomads). The identity need not be self-ascribed or even intentional but it will, overtime, be peer ascribed or stereotyped by “others”. Second, the RV contributes towards the social engagement with “others”, both caravanners and non-caravanners, through its individual agency. ‘The construction of identities is a social practice performed to provide identification with or opposition to the identity of other people [or groups] during a process of social interaction’ (Maffesoli 1996). Groups form their identity in order to differentiate themselves, create boundaries, and otherwise separate themselves from others for particular purposes.

McKerron (2003) suggests that thorough examination of ‘the expressed identities during a specific interaction can lead to the understanding of the reasons for the expression of those identities, and thus illuminate not only the interaction itself but also the processes at work that have brought the individual or group to a specific point in time and place whereby the expressed identities are entirely appropriate to those expressing them’ (p. 1). It is the identification with like-minded others at a specific place and finite time that characterises the purpose of the neo-tribe (Hardy et al. 2013a; Hetherington 1998; Maffesoli 1995; Riley et al. 2010). ‘Neo-tribes create temporary spaces in which to participate in a set of shared practices creating a common bond’ in reaction to changes within or external to the group (Riley et al. 2010). They are ‘comfortable with one another, feel as if they belong together, choose to spend time together, exchange information and travel together’ (McKerron 2003, p. 3).

Such temporary points of attachment give individual RVers identity. As Hall (1996) suggests such subject positions are constructed through the informal practices. Thus, dialogically constructed through difference, self and social identities are based around recognised differences between ones - “self” and the “other” (Cohen 2010; Hall 1996). It is the divide between personal identity, one attributed to self, and social identity, one attributed to the collective, which allows individual members to move in and out of the neo-tribe at will. The RVing neo-tribes are widely diverse. They are inspired:

... by disparate strands [of the western way] of life – from don’t-tread-on-me individualism to an it-takes-a-village communitarianism, from love of nature to a craving for the best creature comforts modernity can offer (or both) (Zane 2014).

The ‘homology of these tourists is such that specific individuals [self] are interchangeable within the neo-tribe [collective]’ (McKerron, p. 3). It is their shared experiences of caravanning that forms
the identification, and further, lead some to newly identify as freedom campers, “swinging” across from commercial camping at will (Caldicott et al. 2014b).

Agency of their vehicle and associated symbolic “things” act as evaluative cues important to self-identity and group or network identity. Further, this agency contributes to social connection with others. Urry (2003, p. 155) describes this connection as ‘meetingness’ or the fluid networks tied to social structures and geography that form social connectedness. This binds together fluid groupings of people that otherwise originate from different walks of life (Maffesoli 1995). The “grouping” behaviour of RVers is similarly noted by Hardy and Gretzel (2013a) who sought to conceptualise RVers also as neo-tribal. The meetingness of RVers exists across caravanning communities broadly and within freedom camping sub-cultures specifically. It also exists between caravanning, non-caravanning and host communities through, for example, exchanges with site staff, visitor information centre staff and general residents of local host communities (see Figure 9 - Social factors). However, the new freedom-face of caravanning also bears a new political spotlight on caravanning per se as freedom campers now overtly consume traditional public rural and urban spaces as non-traditional, but modern RV camping places (Caldicott et al. 2014b).

Public place, as site choice (see Figure 9 - Site choice), as a space for recreation, leisure and living is a complex term with multiple meanings attributed to it in different countries by different users. Place, space and sphere are often interchanged when considering common use and access. In the UK, common use and access implies that the land (place or space) has ‘open access and shared participation without the shadow of the state (with its heavy handed power to tax and regulate) and it implies a place for community assembly apart from the hard sell of the market’ (Blackmer 2006, p. 50; Reynolds 2014). In Australia, broadly speaking, public land is all state-owned land, including parks, land reserved for public roads, hospitals, schools and other public purposes and land vested in public authorities. The term can also apply to land owned by municipal councils, state agencies, the Commonwealth government (VCEC 2011) and also to property leased from the Crown for agriculture production (Department of Industry 2016).

A public place in general terms is where members of the public are permitted to be. Historically, it is described as open outdoor space, “common” or Crown land, collectively owned and accessible by the whole people of a state, nation, or community, over which citizens have certain traditional rights (i.e. state forests and national parks). It is open to common use and not limited or restricted to any particular class of the community. However, as Blackmer (2006) qualifies, at least in the western world, all land is property of the nation state and is now regulated by laws of property...
making it difficult to consider anything as common without encountering an entitled owner or manager. Therefore, public place may be privately owned land to which the public have access by right or by invitation, expressed or implied (e.g. a shopping complex), whether by payment of money or not (ACT 1989; Neal 2010; Parliament of New South Wales 1988; Tonnelat 2010; West’s Encyclopedia of American Law 2008). Payment of access fees in RV circles and more particular freedom camping circles is contentious. Freedom campers often seek public places for their overnight stays as they are either free of fees or offered at subsidised rates by community groups, chambers of commerce, showground trusts and the like. These public, though spatially defined, places are priced well below the local market rate of commercial caravan parks, or in fact fee free.

Although public space is generally taken to mean physical space which is accessible to and usable by the public (streets, parks and squares), private land with access permitted by the owner may also qualify. However, Joseph (1998) says ‘public space is measured according to its accessibility, both physical and psychological’. In other cases however, Neal (2010, p. 3) suggests ‘a space’s physical form is not considered central to the social functions it facilitates’. Indeed, in an enumeration of the social dimensions of such sites, ‘Gieryn (2000) introduces a terminological shift from “space”, which denotes a location defined by abstract geometries of distance and direction, to “place”, which denotes a location by the meanings attributed to it by its users (Neal 2010, p. 3). Thus, some research adopting the socio-spatial perspective may more properly be considered as examining not public space, but public place.

Public places are valued for a variety of competing uses by multiple users with diverse perceptions and motivations that can and do change across time (Williams 2002). This situation raises classical concerns about individuals’ relationships to societies, and more recent questions about mobility and power. Bianchi (2003) suggests that places are not just congruent with a particular geographical location. Rather, as Massey (1991, p. 28) contends they are ‘constructed out of a particular constellation of special relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus’. The space [camping place] is thus a lived experience extending tourism consumption into areas not previously associated with intrinsic tourism production. The landscape is thus altered for/by its tourist purposes. Hence the relationship between tourism, power and social-spatial transformations deserves greater attention as the material forces of economic change and political agency that underpin them forge new social alignments (Bianchi 2003).

Public places can also serve as “third places” (Oldenburg 1998) – the social gathering spots that lie between home and work and provide individuals with the opportunity to form bonds with one
another and with the location itself, which can be severely disrupted if the place dissolves (i.e. see Armidale Dumaresq Council 2014; Bishop 2015; DNRM 2014; Duneir 1992; Francis 2014; Milligan 1998). Public sphere, however, is an abstract term. It refers less to any particular physical space and more to opportunity for access to public information and open discussion; that domain of our social life in which such things as public opinion can be formed (Habermas 1989, p. 231). Street corners and town squares are synonymous as tangible environments of the public sphere, a mediating layer between government and citizens where citizens interact to discuss, agree or disagree with issues of public interest (Castells 2008; Habermas 1989; Johannessen et al. 2016). However, with less news now exchanged in physical settings, public sphere usually refers to any platform where information is shared publicly such as on-line, or in print and broadcast media (Johannessen et al. 2016; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010; Mainka et al. 2014). Though in RV circles the street corner could arguably be compared to the “happy hour” or “campfire circle” where news and politics of the day is still discussed and debated face-to-face just as it was over a century earlier:

It was around the campfire, not the mineshaft, that the conversations took place that grew the armed rebellion at Eureka². In the unusually open society of the campgrounds, shared complaints were shaped into radical proposals around campfires even before they were discussed at mass meetings. These small group discussions drew cohorts together and the outdoors and peripatetic life allowed easy exchange with neighbours, the finding of common ground, and the rapid amplification of demands (Garner 2015).

Campfire exchanges regularly continue in RV campsites across Australia today. ‘Around 5 pm travellers gather for an informal "happy hour" to share a drink and swap tales about life on the road’ (Hiscock 2016). It is a neo-tribal ritual RVers enjoy as they ‘undertake the "Big Lap" - the 15000 kilometre circumnavigation of Australia by road taking anything from a couple of months to a year or more’; RV living on Highway 1 (Caldicott et al. 2017b). When an RVer first comes to a new site the campers nearby often offer assistance, helping the new-comers to get their camp set up before inviting them to the campfire (where open fires are permissible) to maybe have a drink or even a pot-luck dinner (Zane 2014). The face-to-face and virtual social media are both highly valued among RVers. Mobile on-board RV communication equipment ‘including two-way radio and satellite internet technologies allow individual vehicles to act as nodes in a circuit of web-based communication’ (Simpson 2008). The dominant tangible staging arena of RV communities

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² The Eureka rebellion of 1854, which is often referred to as the 'Eureka Stockade', is a key event in the development of Australian democracy and Australian identity; arguably where Australian democracy was born. The rebellion came about because the goldfield workers (known as 'diggers') were opposed to the government’s miners’ licence. The licensing was a simple way for the government to tax the diggers (Australian Government 2010).
has traditionally been RV clubs and RV rallies. However, technological advances are changing the face of this public sphere:

Satellite internet systems have expanded instantaneous and remote communications from nomadic vehicles leading to increased access to, and “online-isation” of, the social networking of micro-communities... instant connectivity [for RVers] at a distance has radically increased social coherency to the point where it may be understood to be as socially dense as it is physically sparse (Simpson 2008, pp. 38-39).

In spite of the growing on-board luxury of modern RVs, the campfire in 2017 remains synonymous with bush camping – the genesis of the freedom camping movement in Australia. As such bush camping is the forebear of other camping terms. It originally inferred that one would camp, usually in a tent, swag\(^3\) or some other makeshift shelter – sometimes overnight and sometimes for extended periods of time. The venues and sites were more likely to be in isolated rural or coastal areas rather than urban areas. As the name suggests, the purpose of the trip was often to “go bush” and escape the rigours of everyday “urban” life. Thus camping sites were carefully chosen for their “discrete” convenience and purpose of trip rather than for their “overt” or flagrant disregard for the law, property rights, natural or built environments. Bush camping was foundational to early exploration, land settlement, movement (trade) of stock, prospecting, and leisure pursuits in Australia (Caldicott 2011a; Garner 2015; Kijas 2010). It followed similar patterns from earlier international contexts (Deen 1995; Elon 1996; Guinn 1980; McGrath 1991; RACQ 1935; Steensgaard 1974). Bush camping in Australia has evolved since settlement in 1788, through federation of 1900 and continues to evolve in both nature and name in 2017.

Freedom camping is known in Australia by many different names: e.g. low-cost, subsidised, free, illegal, street, and van camping with each having varying characteristic as described through Appendix 1 – RV styles, camping spaces and market segments. Likewise, freedom camping internationally has many name variations: boondocking, wild, wilderness, random, dry, enroute, transit, stealth, aire de service, Stellplatz and camping caristes. With less relevance to Australia, further description of these variants is beyond the scope of this thesis unless through specific examples quoted where appropriate. Regardless of international or domestic settings, the sites, pitches, venues, spaces or places where caravanners, inclusive of freedom campers, stay are partly determined by the RVer’s identity. This brings its own degree of agency and in turn reflects on

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\(^3\) Swag is a light rain-proof portable bed roll, originally carried by foot-travellers before automobiles. More sophisticated and weather durable swags have once again become popular among contemporary campers in lieu of sleeping bags.
vehicle selection and site dimensions of freedom, commercial, access, infrastructure, safety and security (see Figure 9 - Site choice).

Regardless of individual site choices, collectively RVing neo-tribes are generating phenomenal growth of caravanning in Australia. This is presenting entrepreneurial opportunities for innovative commercial caravan park operators. Some are seizing the moment to redevelop their existing but sometimes infrastructurally tired park into modern themed holiday resorts (Integrated Site Design Pty Ltd 2010). Resorts are specifically targeting the increasingly discerning but populous family neo-tribe through provision of luxury cabins and themed entertainment precincts. These for instance include waterparks, jumping pillows and specialist holiday programming for children (Caldicott 2011a). Such capital intensive development, often on prime coastal real-estate, is also driving up site fees as innovative park operators seek to achieve profitable returns on their substantial investments. However, this “upgrading” is displacing, and or disenfranchising, other neo-tribes such as those who have traditionally looked to caravan parks as providing only a basic and affordable accommodation option for them as a touring public (Park et al. 2010; Prideaux & McClymont 2006). Appendix 1.4 provides further commentary to the range of commercial camping sites as enshrined in legislation or simply labelled through independent promotional media.

Displacement of campers from their traditional camping modes (through upgrades and associated site fees) is propelling the freedom camping phenomenon as an alternative mode of caravanning for particular disenfranchised neo-tribes. The initial wave was seen predominantly among the grey nomad segment, as not all nomads accept the upgrades as adding value to their touring experience, thus as a “dislocated” group (Walsh & Tucker 2009) they seek alternative site choices. However, nomads are now increasingly being joined by couples, young families and vanpackers in vehicles that display growing levels of self-containment and homely comforts. This recent addition to on-board amenity also facilitates opportunity to experience alternate site choices that offer varying levels of socialisation, infrastructure and price points.

The freedom camping mode allows RV users across multiple neo-tribes to experience independent RVing and to “identify” or be “identified” through their RVs and their associated practices, behaviours and lifestyles. Each neo-tribe imbues their own identity in a way that takes on new “social and experiential meaning” for them (Blumer 1969; Martin et al. 2006). An example of such sub-cultural meaning in the RV world is the symbolism created by the luxury vehicle brand of Winnebago (Figure 10). Generally catering to the mature markets, the luxury extends beyond
internal amenity. It provides luxury of mobility and freedom from the constraints of fixed commercial sites further promoting freedom of choice sites. This brand culture exudes experiential meaning for RVers similar to that of Harley-Davidson for motorcycle enthusiasts and members of the Harley Owners Group (HOG) (Schembri 2009). Schembri argues:

The personal experience of Harley-Davidson embedded in a collective social act (in this case, the Australian HOG community) is a spectacular (postmodern) symbol of freedom, where the rebel image of the bike and the brand is consumed by (predominantly mainstream) consumers, thus highlighting the co-construction of the consumer's brand experience (p. 1299).

In contrast, vanpackers driving converted minivans reminiscent of the 1960s VW Kombi symbolise freedoms of a youthful laissez-faire experience (Harding 2013; Sri 2015; Tuckley 1996). The less self-contained nature of the Kombi particularly its lack of on-board ablution amenities, could cause vanpackers to be stereotyped as commercial and fixed site reliant.

However, evidence abounds demonstrating an experiential preference of some vanpackers to avoid commercially serviced sites wherever possible. Such practices do bring strain to the political debate with arguments presented over environmental, social and economic costs to host communities (Himmelreich 2013; Kinninment 2014; Wilson 2012). Vanpackers often preference “street camping” as site choice, breaching social boundaries around camping norms as projected by the “other”. A full description of the range of RVs used in freedom camping is presented at Appendix 1.2 and the freedom and commercial sites used by them at Appendix 1.3 and 1.4.

### 3.4.4 Site choice typology

A growing international literature (Caldicott et al. 2014a; Czapla et al. 2010; DTESB 2014d; DTV 2011; Greenfields 2008; Jones 2016b; Peters 2010; SCR Swedish Camping 2010) indicates there is
already considerable demand for freedom camping and camping sites. It also highlights the strong criticism of the practice as commercial caravanning associations and some community-interest groups actively lobby their government representatives (see Byron Shire Council 2012c; CIAA 2015e; CIAA 2016c; White 2014), over land-use issues, particularly when camping at sites not zoned for same are made available by local councils. The term freedom camping is interpreted, valued and applied by commercial, public and special interest groups across Australia and internationally in many different ways. These also vary across time and also concurrently from town to town, local government to local government, state to state and nation to nation as stakeholders and policies change (see Figure 9 - Stakeholders and policy). To demonstrate, a snapshot of international experiences is presented next. The select range of positions towards freedom camping concludes with the Australian planning and policy perspective.

3.4.5 International comparisons

The international comparisons below seek to provide contextual meaning and learning opportunities for Australia, particularly against the different policy and stakeholder landscapes. They are drawn from a range of secondary materials supported by my own personal RVing experiences as displayed in Table 2. While each country does experience political debate on freedom camping, and none would present as the political panacea, each does serve to broaden understanding of the freedom camping phenomenon. The commonality among the selection is that each is a western developed nation with a high propensity for RV recreation and “relative” freedom of movement for citizens and visitors. Each does though have property laws which restrict general public access, by varying degrees, to freehold and public lands, particularly vehicular access for freedom camping.

As my own camping experiences demonstrate the market segments and thus demand for commercial caravan park sites and freedom camping spaces are not mutually exclusive. As a “swinging camper” (Caldicott & Harris 2015b; Caldicott et al. 2014a) and of various neo-tribes, I frequented both styles of camping place (see Site typology at Figure 9). Although sharing a common camp, at times, my experience highlights subsets as not homogenous nor static within any single neo-tribe (McKerron 2003). RVers do, however, remain self and peer-identified caravanners of several categories within the broad foundation to a total international RVing market. The following section provides an overview of policy settings and practice for freedom camping across the five international comparative counties displayed at Table 2: New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom, Central Europe, Sweden and Australia.
Table 2 - My personal international freedom camping experiences
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total nights</th>
<th>Commercial camp nights</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Level of self-sufficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2*</td>
<td>Hired car for car-camping</td>
<td>Low - full reliance on public/private facilities plus friends and relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>Hired Winnebago motorhome</td>
<td>High - minimal requirement for public/private facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Europe</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Hired Wicked van</td>
<td>Medium - some reliance on public/private facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Private car for car-camping</td>
<td>Low - full reliance on public/private facilities plus friends and relatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3*</td>
<td>Private 4x4 that was camp-kitted with rooftop tent</td>
<td>Medium - some reliance on public/private facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Commercial camps were used for strategic reasons related to different parts of the research and experience desired

New Zealand

New Zealand has a Freedom Camping Act (New Zealand Parliament 2011). The 2011 gazettal means camping is widely permitted on public conservation lands. Exclusion zones do apply where camping, and even general access, is specifically prohibited (see Booth 2006; McIntyre et al. 2001), or access is restricted to self-contained vehicles only. This usually occurs as a result of cultural significance, the presence of endangered species, of previous inappropriate use of a site or as a means to promote equitable access to sites (New Zealand Department of Conservation 2014). In response to the introduction of the Act the New Zealand Motor-Camping Association (NZMCA) developed and distributed a Model Freedom Camping Bylaw to support local governments in their management of freedom camping (NZMCA 2013a). This model bylaw specifically reminds councils that unless restricted or prohibited under a local bylaw made in accordance with Section 11 of the Act, freedom camping is allowed in any local authority area unless it is prohibited by another enactment (NZMCA 2013a).

Such prohibitions may serve to protect local authority areas, access to local authority areas or the health and safety of people visiting local authority areas (NZMCA 2013a). However, the Freedom Camping Act 2011, for New Zealand, has not been the total panacea for all camping disputes, land-use contests and social conflicts, as some communities are experiencing (Cropp 2016c; Murdoch 2015; Naden 2014; Simpson 2016). In Christchurch, freedom campers overnighting at Wind Sport Park are reportedly “stealing showers” from the nearby caravan park:
I caught six freeloaders [stealth campers] stealing showers in one week alone. Our turnover is down 10-15% since the Windsurfer Park was opened to free-campers. We are not against freedom camping out in the wild. We just don’t think it is fair to have this situation forced on us by Council. Freedom camping should be prohibited within the 60 km/h zones (pers. comm., Bobby, Kiwi Holiday Park and Motel, 5 December 2015).

While other areas such as Dunedin (Porteous 2014) and Taranaki (Strongman 2014) are reporting ‘it’s all positive in our view’, Westland District Council mayor, Maureen Pugh, said her council took exception to the Freedom Camping Act 2011 on the premise that ‘ …the large number of cars, station wagons and sleeper vans [not self-contained] being used for camping has meant that our roadsides are virtually open sewers, and there is nothing we can do to control that’ (Fraser 2013).

Westland Council and Thames Coromandel Council each passed a bylaw with total prohibition on freedom camping on Council tenured lands. NZMCA subsequently challenged the bylaws, on behalf of its motor-camping members, taking the cases to the High Court (Radio New Zealand News 2014a, 2014b). Westland withdrew their defence, ‘bowing to pressure from the powerful New Zealand Motor Caravan Association’ and revoked the bylaw (Fraser 2013). Thames Coromandel Council was ordered to revoke their bylaws as clauses ‘restricting places where motorhomes could park’ were ruled unlawful (Radio New Zealand News 2014a). NZMCA defended their action on the basis of the bylaws being illegal and not adequately addressing matters as specified in Section 11 of the Freedom Camping Act 2011 (NZMCA 2013b). The Christchurch mayor believes NZ needs a nationwide approach to freedom camping because there were too many sets of rules depending on which part of the country campers were in. She is inviting the federal government to step in and amend the Freedom Camping Act 2011:

You can’t tell a tourist coming to New Zealand that we have one set of rules in this council, another set of rules in that council, another set of rules in the South Island, another set of rules in the North Island, another set of rules for Dock lands and another set of rules for council lands, and by the way, you can’t tell the difference between them (Lianne Dalziel in Stylianou et al. 2016).

Prime Minister of New Zealand and Minister for Tourism, John Keys MP responded by pushing the responsibility straight back towards councils:

If councils collectively as a group are saying, look there should be one standard for freedom camping that is probably a good idea but they don’t need the government to make them do it. If they want to do it they should just hold hands and do it (John Keys MP in Stylianou et al. 2016).

Through a case study on Freedom Camping Management in the Otago and southern regions of New Zealand, Keenan (2012) found ‘the regulatory approach preferred by some councils, of issuing infringement notices to freedom campers, could potentially impact on the tourism appeal
of New Zealand as a camping destination’ (p. ii). Rather, ‘the importance of non-regulatory approaches, such as signage, providing facilities and education about responsible camping was the preferred key theme that emerged’ (p. ii). Overall the study concludes ‘that freedom camping can have a future within New Zealand. Freedom camping can be managed to mitigate the adverse effects it may have on the environment and local communities while still providing for freedom camping as an option for both New Zealand residents and international visitors travelling New Zealand’ (p. 11).

United States

The United States similarly permits freedom camping (boondocking) on federal conservation lands (National Parks Service 2016). Much of this estate is operated by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) although other agencies such as the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Forest Services, National Parks Service, Bureau of Reclamation, National Archives and Records Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association all offer freedom camping opportunities. Additionally, the major box store franchise Walmart also offers boondocking within their carparks at select locations (Roundabout Publications 2016) as do major highway service centres (Pilot Flying J 2016) and gambling casinos (Campground.com 2016):

Yes, you can go to a truck stop. You can go to a Walmart. Walmart allows you to park in their places. There are lots of free-camping spaces around ... all of the casinos allow you to stay up to three nights in their parking lots. So there are lots of options and you won’t get yourself into legal trouble (pers. com., Anne, Oasis Palms RV Resort, California, 25 December 2015).

While these no cost opportunities still exist for freedom camping in the US ‘where RVs can park in a variety of places that are not campgrounds’ (Moeller & Moeller 1993, p. 363) there is also a vast array of commercial sites also offered by federal agencies at tariffs well below the market rates. For example the Department of the Interior, Land and Water Resources, and National Parks Service offer sites with full services through their “America the Beautiful” pass program for less than USD $20.00 per night. When purchased with a Seniors Card (USD$ 10.00 for life-time membership post 62 years of age) the tariffs are further discounted by 50% (National Parks Service 2016). ‘Anytime we are charged $10 or more for a campsite that does not have 30-amp service, we feel we are being ripped off’ (Moeller & Moeller 1993, p. 354). Additionally, annual passes can be purchased for longer-term camping on BLM lands. The $180 annual-pass entitle 28 day stays at one site before the occupant is required to vacate (BLM 2012). Campers can go directly to another BLM site – commercial or free – but is must be at least 30 miles distant:
Yes, you can pull up anywhere around Quartzsite, you will see Dome Rock Road. I was a camp hostie over there in Arizona at one of the BLM campsites, it is all free (pers. comm., George, Slab City, California, 25 December 2015).

The federal lands become an archipelago for camping tourists seeking to avoid fully commercial sites (Simpson 2008). Additionally, they provide relief to many RVing snowbirds (Ming & McHugh 1995) as they undertake their annual migration to the southern states during the colder northern winters. According to Counts and Counts (1996) there are other boondocking sites:

...in the winter, hotel/motel parking lots; in the summer, school yards. Anywhere else that is quiet and that we won’t be in anyone’s way. Shopping centres, church parking lots (except on Saturday night) (p. 173).

The mix of free urban and wilderness sites are complemented by commercial BLM sites that, from my own personal experience, provide excellent value for money. With these low-cost commercial options the imperative for totally free sites is reduced with wide-ranging choices available providing ready relief for mobile RVers seeking alternative camping places.

United Kingdom

Within the United Kingdom freedom camping is commonly called motor-camping, off-site camping or wild camping. The latter is enshrined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which was set up as a requirement of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (Hadfield 2015). Scotland is the only part of the UK that has specific legislation pertaining to wild camping although this is targeted towards ramblers rather than motor campers. The English Department for Transport advises there to be no national legislation which either specifically permits or prohibits road-side motor-camping (Hadfield 2015). However, a number of clauses detailed in the primary and secondary road legislations give effect to restrictions, particularly requirements for parking at night. In addition, some local authorities have passed Traffic Regulation Orders which permit/prohibit overnight camping in vehicles within the area over which they have jurisdiction. Restrictions are enforced through local bylaws with associated signage which usually prohibits parking between the hours of 11pm and 7am (Whitby Gazette 2015). The police, local authorities and landowners have powers to take action where any trespassers are camping on land unlawfully (Hadfield 2015).

Within the whole of the UK, all land is owned by some “body”, be that a natural person, a private company or a public body (Hadfield 2015). The Enclosure Act (1709–1869) strongly defends property rights – private and public. The right to roam without compensation to landowners was beyond access for the public until the enactment of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) (UK Government 2014). This though still only permitted rights to walkers and backcountry
campers – not vehicular access across private lands for motor-camping. Rather, all motor-camping places are required to conform to the requirements of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (UK Government 1960) with access to land, and camping on land, outside of registered campgrounds only with the express permission of the landowner. Effectively there’s no "right" to simply stay anywhere in the UK. Under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, specifically clause 77, campers can be asked to move on at any time and the police have powers to remove and fine those that fail to comply.

National Motorhome Association (NMA) campaigner, Mr Andy Strangeway says overnight motorhome camping has been a source of contention for several years in the UK. Particular hotspots include sea-fronts in resort towns such as those of North Yorkshire (Strangeway 2015a). Strangeway quotes ‘Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Lincolnshire all to have provision for free overnight parking available to cars, vans, motorhomes and heavy goods vehicles (HGVs), as is the case across every county in the UK’ (Strangeway 2014e). However, responding to the North Yorks Enquirer (Ward 2015) which reported on a potential legal challenge to the North Yorkshire County Council’s (NYCC) proposal to prohibit on-street parking, Strangeway warns such a bylaw would be a breach of fundamental legislation and make motor-camping illegal. UKMotorhomes.net (2016) have a disclaimer on their website warning that the locations within their listing, for car and lorry parking, are not dedicated camping sites (similar to Aires in Europe) but ‘are simply the ones we understand to have no regulations prohibiting overnight sleeping eating and cooking’. While Stangeway suggests there to be ‘no proposed resolution in sight’ to the contest for overnight parking space, David Bowe, NYCC’s director of Business Services said ‘a ban prohibiting motor-caravans from overnight camping on earmarked roads between 11pm and 7am is to be introduced’ (Whitby Gazette 2015). Responding to previously introduced parking bans at other Lincolnshire car parks, Strangeway (2014a) requested of the Deputy Director, Democracy, Department for Communities and Local Government that the introduced bylaws be revoked:

I write to you with regards to the new Lincolnshire Bylaw for Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces. Please see attached (Bylaw 1234).

I believe the bylaw should be revoked for the following reasons:

- Bylaws for Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces as per The Public Health Act 1875 164 do not apply to car parks. A definition of Open Space can be found in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 S336. It states: “open space” means any land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground”. 
The bylaw attempts to address in general terms issues which are essentially national rather than local.

The local authority have not used existing legislation to deal with the issues they believe exist. Legislation already exists to deal with all stated issues.

No consultation took place with motorhome or fishing groups.

The bylaw gratuitously interferes with those fishing from the beach, an area which is known to be the finest fishing in the area. As most of this fishing is undertaken at night the bylaw hinders, obstructs and impedes fishermen fishing as they are unable to park overnight.

The bylaw duplicates national legislation.

This single example of politics over freedom camping within a specific region of England is synonymous with activity happening at other UK locations (Hogger 2013; West 2014). Prosecutions have been attempted but the pro motor-camping campaign mounted by Strangeway, on behalf of NMA, demonstrated local bylaws were breaching national legislation. Lincolnshire County Council was forced to concede that the bylaw had no legal foundation:

... this bylaw, is part of a series of local bylaws which are due for review. As such we acknowledge that the current restrictions communicated on the sign, namely ‘No overnight parking or sleeping’ are not capable of being enforced under the bylaw. Therefore I will be recommending the removal of all these signs from the area around St Anthony’s Bank (Northeast Lincolnshire Council 2014, p. 1).

The NMA case was largely founded on technicalities, interpretations and contradictions within existing and proposed local laws additional to national laws (Northeast Lincolnshire Council 2014; Strangeway 2014c, 2014d). Several attempted litigations were unsuccessful. NMA claims Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) tried to intimidate them by advising 40 summonses had been issued to overnighting motorhomers, a position Strangeway challenged (Campbell 2014; Strangeway 2014b). He invited LCC to issue him personally with a summons after staging overnight parking demonstrations in defiance of “No Motor Caravan Overnight Parking” signage (Campbell 2014). The intimidation failed as only three unrelated summonses were processed and none were issued directly to Mr Stangeway for overnight camping:

Eighteen months ago I received an e-mail requesting my help. I met an amazing group of people [motorhomers] who enjoy the simple pleasures of the Lincolnshire Coast. For reasons unknown, Lincolnshire County Council [LCC] object to this and spent over £150,000 to prevent it. This group contained Alex Sprott, who like myself, will never be intimidated by the state. LCC erred by issuing a summons to Alex. Today our karma has ripened, we took on the state and won (Strangeway 2015b).
The cyclic contest over access to public space for freedom camping in the UK is not a recent phenomenon. Freedom of movement and thus public access for travellers was all the inspiration Scotsman, Dr Gordon Stables needed when he invented the first recorded “leisure-only” caravan in the 1880s (Hassler 1989; Huth 2006; Lay 1998). Of the “gentlemen-gypsies” (Wilson 1986) in the latter half of the nineteenth Century, Stables travelled throughout England in a horse drawn caravan writing boys’ adventure stories. In his book, *The Cruise of the Land Yacht Wanderer*, he describes many of his adventures navigating and negotiating his land yacht (caravan) through the public landscape (Wilson 1986). Planning and policy decisions to find temporary and permanent sites for present-day travellers continue across the UK. While off-site camping needs of ethnic groups of Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are legally protected in the UK by the *Race Relations Act 1976* (Greenfields 2008; Hogger 2013), the off-site camping needs of touring motor campers are still not officially recognised in UK law. Community tensions continue to surface as unauthorised motor camps establish on public land. In 2015 North Yorkshire County Council conducted surveys of residents and campers to ‘explore the problem’ (Whitby Gazette 2015). Despite the strong local oppositional interests to freedom camping in public parking spaces, a council spokesperson said ‘council could hold a public inquiry, but no one had asked for one’ (Whitby Gazette 2015).

**Central Europe**

In contrast to the UK, several countries in Central Europe such as France and Italy have dedicated “Aires de service” as rest areas set aside exclusively for self-contained motorhomes and campervans (MotorhomeFacts.com 2012b). In some places these are completely free of charge and without basic services. In other places they include power and water hook-ups for a fee of around one Euro per hour. Additionally, private camping on vineyards, olive groves and other agri-tourism establishments is accepted with landowner consent (Fearis 2009; France Passion 2016). Hence a blanket consideration of off-site or wild camping as “illegal” does not reflect the true nature of freedom camping across Europe. During my own Central Europe “Wicked-vanning” experience, a Leading Camping’s representative told me ‘illegal camping is a harsh word for us’ (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar, Leading Camping, 22 May 2012). However, as ever, the different sovereign states have different legislation. While there are countries like Croatia where staying overnight in a camping vehicle outside of campgrounds is strictly forbidden there are other countries like Italy where you have the right to park your motorised vehicle in any designated parking space, anytime. In these cases self-contained campervans and motorhomes are seen as passenger cars and as such they may park anywhere that is not generally or temporary prohibited and marked through signage. ‘In these more liberal freedom camping states only trailing caravans
are obliged to stay overnight in a regulated campground’ (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar, Leading Camping, 22 May 2012).

To add to the confusion, Frederick indicated there is a third group of countries like Germany where every driver has the right to sleep on any parking lot in any vehicle ‘in order to recover from sudden tiredness and obtain fitness to drive’. Frederick suggested this regulation was originally made for truck drivers in the 1950s but is still part of the German legislation. The police respect it but can make some independent judgement as to the validity of a claim of tiredness. ‘No worry, if a caravan driver sleeps on a motorway parking lot during his journey into vacation, but serious concerns if the driver says that he fell nearly asleep while driving on a very small road in the unspoilt countryside on a parking lot right in front of the most beautiful lake’ (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar Leading Camping, 22 May 2012).

Germany, France and Italy have the densest network of motorhome overnight parking areas in Europe (MotorhomeFacts.com 2012a). These range from public gravel spaces without any infrastructure to well-equipped Stellplatz, similar to Aires in France. They have in common that they do not accept caravans, only self-contained motorhomes. Each country has sophisticated directories for off-site camps parallel to their commercial camping guides:

There is also my organisation of commercial camp grounds. It is Leading Camping. Some of our entrepreneurial members also run a separate campervan area (Stellplatz) in the carpark of their commercial campground (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar, Leading Camping, 22 May 2012).

Only a week prior to my conversation with Frederick, on 12 May 2012, the Federal Association of the Camping Economy in Germany (BVCD) signed a memorandum of understanding with Top Platz, the organisation representing the higher quality Stellplatz owners to jointly promote motorhome camping across Germany. ‘For us [Top Platz], it is crucial we increasingly integrate the interests and positions of the parking operators in the discussions with the caravanning sector through this working group’ (Jurgen Dieckert, Director of Top Platz cited in BVCD 2012). Director of BVCD Services, Daniella Leipelt said, “I am looking forward to closer cooperation with Top Platz because together we can be more effective … showing how much Germany is the travel destination for camping guests from home and abroad and now has become more attractive and varied’ (BVCD 2012). The Leading Camping representative told me:

I foresee a new level [of camping]. After years of hate and war between campground owners and overnight-stop providers in the late 80s and 90s, followed by a peaceful coexistence on two strictly divided markets between 2000 and 2010 we now launch a
decade of merging markets – at least under pressure of the growing number of motorhomes and the shrinking market of caravans which forces campsites to open themselves to matters of fact that cannot be ignored (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar Leading Camping, 22 May 2012).

My observations, personal experiences and conversations with a range of industry representative in Central Europe demonstrate that while there was still difference between the countries, the opportunities to freedom camp were abundant. Germany in particular has acknowledged the split camping markets, acknowledging ‘freedom campers are distinct individuals. They seek destinations away from the beaten track of mass-tourism and financially are widely independent’ (DTV 2011, p. 2). In response to the emerging organic supply of Stellplatz and demand shown for this new layer of infrastructure, the German Tourism Association (DTV) prepared a Planning Guide for Trailer Parking Outside of Commercial Sites in Germany (DTV 2011). DTV claim up to 3000 additional parking spaces, ‘more varied and more alive than ever’, were created as a result of the “new” regulations (p. 3).

Through a landmark study of Motorhome Tourism in Germany, Peters (2003) brought to light that campers are extremely travel active and without such nimble infrastructure, allowing 24 hour machine assist access (independent check-in) to freedom camping, part of the potential custom would be lost from Germany. Road-side service centres such as those I experienced operated by Autobahn Tank & Rast (Sanifair 2015) also offer very presentable bathroom amenities to cater for all road users including RV travellers who also camp overnight in the service centre parking areas. ‘As Top Platz is the most sophisticated program for off-site camping in Germany, despite its German origin, it is slowly spreading its network also over Denmark, The Netherlands and Northern Italy’ (pers. comm., Frederick Goslar, Leading Camping, 22 May 2012).

**Sweden**

Sweden, along with its Scandinavian neighbours, is famous for allowing public access to all land under the terms of *allemansratten* or the everyman’s right to roam (Nature Travels 2008). This instrument of government supports the freedom to roam - walk, cycle, ski and camp for up to 48 hours on any land with exception only to the immediate vicinity of a private residence. Although this ancient provision fosters public walking access, and does extend to snowmobiles on frozen lakes and snow covered fields or forests in winter, it does not support open and unvetted vehicular access across private lands. However, it is legal to vehicle camp on the sides of public roads, rest areas and parking places for up to 48 hours unless explicitly signed otherwise. Thus, while freedom camping in a tent associated with rambling, berry picking or backcountry hiking is permitted on
private property without permission, vehicular camping is not openly supported without the express consent of the landowner:

Regarding “allemansratten” many international tourists sometimes have the knowledge that it means you can stay overnight in all different places and nobody can tell them to move. The Swedish tourism industry is aware of this and try to inform international tourists the true content of “allemansratten” (pers. comm., Gusten Mandelson, Swemarketing, 21 August 2012)

However, the Swedish Camping Owners’ Association in 2010 recognised RVers’ desire for greater access to camping places and for a less regulated form of camping space. Following a survey of 1541 respondents from RV clubs and Camping Card Scandinavia holders, two levels of service and amenity provision were identified (SCR Swedish Camping 2010). Commercial caravan pitches for long stays were already available but demand was growing for simpler short-term automated services such as Stellplatz in Germany and Aires in France. These 24 hour access parking places for overnight camping, with payment and services through automated kiosks, are now auspiced through the Motor Caravan Destination Sweden Project (SCR Swedish Camping 2010). Five Stellplatz were completed by 2013 with SCR’s ambition to have 100 new pitches by 2020.

Australia

In Australia, across the different states and territories, freedom camping is acknowledged to regularly occur on vacant Crown land. The practice is generally tolerated unless the specific place is signed otherwise by an authority – the authority taken to be the lawful land owner or managing agent (e.g. Waterways, Main Roads and Councils). The signage inference supports the English notion that the power stemming from property rights and the law arise not so much from the possession of the land but more from the ability to exclude others wishing to access the property (Church & Ravenscroft 2007). This vague representation to a national policy for access rights to Crown lands, particularly for the purposes of freedom camping, is not widely or openly documented in Australia. Instead it is historic and rests with individual states and local governments to interpret. Road-side RV camping at highway rest areas, although not designed or intended as camping places, is also permissible unless explicitly signed otherwise (DTESB 2014b, 2014d). This latter and very visible level of camping is contentious and raises considerable discrepancies in interpretations between different stakeholders and the managing agencies.

To highlight important policy positions and perspectives in the Australian context, and to develop a baseline for future discourse, Caldicott et al. (2014b) observed four key interest groups:

1. camping consumers: represented by the CMCA and/or MoTOURING Australia;
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2. caravan park operators: represented by CIAA;
3. state and territory governments: that have devolved camping regulatory power down to their respective local governments; and
4. local governments: that have the dual role of representing their resident, business and visitor communities as well as regulating places and spaces locals and visitors use for commercial and freedom camping.

These stakeholder groups (see Figure 9 - Stakeholders and policy) ‘were identified through various literatures, including: independent state parliamentary inquiries; government agency sponsored reports; and, as the parties invariably criticise each other through the popular press’ (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 8).

In view of the very visible geographic contest for public spaces (see Site typology at Figure 9) and inversely the equally invisible ideological contest for an elusive political judgement on freedom camping, the gulf between freedom camping consumers and the general public, and more particularly commercial caravan park operators, continues to fuel debate across Australia. This debate, while playing out publicly in the popular press and social media (see Chapter 1 – Introduction) is also active in political offices of state and federal parliaments and local councils of regional communities – both urban and rural. It arises in places ranging from populous and popular coastal communities to outback, and through caravanning emerging communities in tourism popularity (see Chapter 5 – Council case study profiles). In the void of any national Australian policy, or uniform planning or regulatory guidelines, approximately 560 individual local councils (ALGA 2016) in six individual states and two territories are receiving and processing mixed messages on freedom camping from a plethora of conflicting evidentiary material. Arguments and counter arguments - prejudices, suspicions, distrust and agenda setting - are commonplace among the opposing lobbies in the freedom camping planning and policy environment. By example, the submission from the Caravan Industry Association of Western Australia (CIAWA 2014) to Shire of Esperance during their public consultation for RV Friendly Town status suggests:

...it is therefore not surprising that Esperance Caravan Park owners and commercial businesses have a widespread belief that the Shire of Esperance has a preconceived bias and agenda against their [caravan park] businesses, be this real or implied (p. 7).

The Shire’s move towards exploring RV Friendly Town status with their community was a direct response to recommendations of a 2009 State parliamentary enquiry (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009) demonstrating the vertical nexus between state and local governance arrangements but also the impact or influence of state-level policy-making on local level decision-
making and the apparent “disconnect” between government policy and community aspirations (Dredge & Jenkins 2011b).

3.4.6 Site types

Caravanning and camping, as leisure pursuits synonymous with Australian culture (Garner 2013), are also transitioning within a camping site matrix with site amenity anchors from primitive facilities to luxury facilities and corresponding commercial anchors from high cost commercial to no cost freedom (Figure 11). In part, camping is moving backward towards its primitive freedom origins and departing from more contemporary and socially constructed commercial norms that have elevated in luxury over recent decades. The site indicators within this matrix, although not mutually exclusive, are trending, at least for a growing market (DTESB 2014c, 2014d), towards the freedom camping pole. Such practice trends are exposing the void in caravanning planning and policy praxis and in tourism, recreation and leisure literature to match. RVers are increasingly making choices in camping mode, style, motivations and place, and they swing between commercial camping and freedom camping places. This trend is consolidating a new camping market segment labelled by Caldicott et al. (2014b) as “swinging campers” (see also Site typology at Figure 9). The Australian camping site matrix (Figure 11) demonstrates the emerging need for social and land-use planning guidelines that acknowledge the freedom camping phenomenon generally and the swinging campers specifically, as the latter alternate across the spectrum of site choices identified.

As freedom camping becomes ever more apparent, its general visibility is noticed in many more public places such as vacant Crown lands, public reserves and travelling stock routes. But more particularly, it is the occupation of road-side rest areas, urban streets, car parks and urban and regional showgrounds as public places that is most visible and cause of most political contention. Criticisms over freedom camping in Australia arise in that ‘the planning and management of public spaces and places, as limited community resources, are inherently political activities’ (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 417). Exploring the range of camping site choices represented as “freedom” sites, particularly through the Australian camping site matrix, freedom camping places can be further categorised into two streams: first, destination venues; and second, transit venues. The latter are for overnight stays of a short duration, usually accepted as less than 72 hours, while RVers are travelling between “generating regions” and “destination regions” (Leiper 1989). These stays are most often associated with road-side rest areas, road reserves, streets, car parks or vacant Crown lands.
Destination venues are places at which RVers spend considerable amounts of time across a season or trip, whether as part of a multi-destination journey or as the target destination for a trip. RVers engaging in freedom camping actively seek destination venues that welcome their presence and embrace their participation within the host community (Cridland 2008; Fernbach et al. 2014; Howells 2016; Johnson 2016; Southburnett.com.au 2016). Their stays are most often associated with venues such as vacant Crown lands, showgrounds, water resource estates, exploration/mining leases, public reserves, Aboriginal reserves, pastoral leases or private properties (see also Site typology at Figure 9).
Despite the rich history of camping on many different land tenures, freedom camping is also now under pressure from conservation agencies in several states such as the WA Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPAW), Victoria's National Park Group (VicParks) and the NSW Department of Industry – Land Division (DILD). These agencies seek to limit access, contain sites, increase amenity and charge fees for a pastime that many Australian’s see as their traditional heritage and moral right – a right to freedom camp in the Australian bush (Garner 2014; Symons 2015). Cynics (see Johnston 2013, 2015; Jones 2016b; Symons 2015) may argue this to be just another attempt by the state to control the masses, all under the pretence of environmental protection. Such cynics would go on to declare the move as “daylight robbery” and nothing but a leisure tax, raising revenues for state coffers. Such a cynic is Mr Jerry Ryan as owner of Jayco, Australia’s largest caravan manufacturer. Controlling about 45% of the RV manufacturing market Ryan has undeniable vested economic interests. He called on the federal and state government to make more national parks available for camping, ensuring Australians can continue their immersion with the great outdoors (Lynch 2015). Ryan argues, ‘people have been camping for years and will continue to camp for years, and we need to make sure that we have got the facilities, the [affordable] camp grounds, for people to park their vans’ (Lynch 2015).

Furthering the theme of heritage from below versus regulation from above, Selwood and Jones (2010) describe a parallel form of freedom camping in Western Australia through coastal squatter settlements. They maintain that what has been a fundamentally spontaneous process over several decades and generations, “ordinary” Western Australians have camped, built shacks and enjoyed the opportunity for unsupervised and unregulated coastal camping experiences:

In a ‘frontier’ state, their right to camp, to fish and even to build ‘shacks’ largely went unchallenged until the late 20th Century [see Chapter 3 – The constraining period] and came to be seen as a part of their heritage. Like the 19th Century squatters before them (Powell 1970), they had moved into areas arbitrarily claimed by distant imperial or colonial authorities that lacked the means to control and administer them. They were characteristically Crown lands that, at the time, were not being used by any other elements of the settler population. Unlike the pastoral squatters [the landed], however, the shackies [the un-landed] generally did not and do not possess the same economic or

4 Originating in 19th Century England, the landed society were the class of aristocrats that owned land giving them greater opportunity of production and hence wealth (Spring & Spring 1985; Thompson 2013). There is great irony here as successful squatters in Australia held considerable social and political power gained through “illegal exploitation and occupation of vacant Crown land” for grazing livestock making them among the wealthiest class of people in the new colony. They came to be described (in a play on the English aristocracy) as the ‘squattocracy’ (Roberts 1924; emphasis in original).
the political power as their forebears. So, when in the late 20th Century many coastal sites were becoming increasingly prized real-estate [again for a different group of the landed] and pressure grew for greater regulation of coastal development, the shackies had to confront growing challenges to what they saw as their idyllic and, in many ways, quintessentially Australian, lifestyle. They had to face the opposing and official position that the flaunting of formal legal and proprietorial constraints is a transgressive form of behaviour not to be condoned (Selwood & Jones 2010, p. 79).

In direct juxtaposition to the “contain, upgrade and homogenise” system of natural resource management, Davies et al. (2009) recommend uniform management models for coastal camping should be avoided, particularly if models undermine current camping diversity in an area. Through their study of the Coastal Camping in the Rangelands of Western Australia, Davies et al. (2009) found camping to be highly variable and the nature and characteristics of campers, including freedom campers, to be diverse. Such findings similarly support Southerton et al. (2003). Within the Rangelands, camping is a highly valued social activity for both residents of and visitors to the region:

Many long-term campers and campers who frequently visit the area (including surfers, recreational fishers and four-wheel-drive enthusiasts) have undertaken a number of valuable environmental protection and rehabilitation activities, driven by individuals’ and groups’ strong ethic of environmental stewardship. Campers tending to stay at low-cost campsites, with few regulations governing activities, often demonstrated a stronger ethic of environmental stewardship and sense of community and belonging. These campers were most likely to be involved in environmental protection and rehabilitation efforts. Increasing the regulation of these campsites, with resultant increased costs for campers, would cause the environmental stewards to be displaced [see Chapter 4 – Recognising four periods of policy activity] with potential detriment to environmental management in the Rangelands coastal area (Davies et al. 2009, p. 4).

Where freedom camping was observed to be contained, with tightening of regulations and development of well-serviced camping nodes, a monopoly or mono-culture of short-term visitation occurs. The short-term visitors have a lower level of connection to the area and thus rarely participate in volunteer environmental conservation efforts (Davies et al. 2009). As grey nomad campers are predominant within the isolated north western Rangelands, Davies et al. also acknowledged need for further research to support regional strategic planning to best cater to this important market segment (see also Chapter 4 - Queensland). On the opposite side of the country, and all along the east coast, but specific to hotspots such as Sydney, Byron Bay, Gold Coast and Cairns, vanpacker campers are prominent. As this segment is notorious for short-term stays, cautious lessons can be taken from the WA example before east coast councils (land managers) proceed “naively” (Grossman 2015) with tightening of regulations and development of high service camping nodes. Congleton (2006, p. 188; see also Grossman 2015) warn that to shift
policy in ignorance to ‘the complete list of possibilities and with incomplete understanding of causal relationships ... maybe onerous in many respects’. Instead, Davies et al. (2009) recommend future management strategies would be well served through active engagement with the locals and visitors, through genuine community-based planning and policy, as mere displacement is not a solution (see Chapter 4 – Local governments’ challenge).

3.4.4.1 Shifts in camping behaviour

While the two venue types (transit and destination) identified above are not mutually exclusive, the dominant shift emerging is the growing consumption of freedom camping and the social and physical movement from covert towards overt nature of camping (Caldicott 2013). The venues where freedom camping happens are now more visible (overt) to more people (industry, resident and regulatory), in more communities (rural, coastal and metropolitan) and used by more consumers (intrastate, interstate and international). This shift is noticed by several communities of interest. Some welcome the shift while others are not so welcoming, to the point of hostility (Amor 2012; Gardiner 2013b; Luke 2010). Not contained to, but by way of example, several prominent rivals surface. The opposing commercial caravan park sector and their proposing RV consumer lobbies each raise concerns over principles of competitive neutrality (Commonwealth Treasury 1999) and protectionism (Nagarajan 2002) respectively. Environmentalists raise concern over sustainability, trampling, waste management, erosion and land management restorative practices (Davies et al. 2009; Lawrie 2007). Resident communities (Holloway 2009) and governance communities (Local Government NSW 2015c) raise issues of economic stimulation, volunteerism and cultural enhancement at one level and host-guest conflict, social disharmony and law/regulatory enforcement (Coagan 2010; Gardiner 2013a) on a different level (see Figure 9 - Stakeholders and policy).

Figure 12 and Figure 13 encapsulate the special nature of the shift from freedom camping as a covert activity to an overt activity through venue positioning (locations) in both the destination and transit modes. At the destination level (Figure 12), freedom campers, that were once content to find secluded off-road sites in rural locations with no access to services, are moving towards unregulated camping sites closer to town boundaries and even within central business district (CBD) locations for some of their travel experiences (see Bundaberg Regional Council 2016; Burdikin Shire Council 2014; Home Hill Chamber of Commerce 2010). This trend is emulating experiences and opportunities commonly available to self-contained campers, predominantly motorhomers, in the United States, Europe and New Zealand through camping caristes, aires de services and Stellplatz camping.
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Figure 12 - Shift in destination-area freedom camping locations
Source: Author

Figure 13 - Shift in transit-route freedom camping locations
Source: Author
At the transit level (Figure 13), freedom campers show a propensity for more overt camping locations, particularly along major highways and in many popular coastal locations known as hotspots. The highway venues can be dedicated off-road sites, often managed by a community trust or charity or simply be road-side park-rest-relax sites. These sites sometimes service heavy haulage vehicles also. The dual use often generates conflict among users (DTESB 2014b; Howell 2014). The road-side places often only provide basic services of toilets and bins (DTESB 2014a). A further move towards overt camping is at a street-level where campers park unlawfully on vacant blocks among residential and industrial properties (Gilmore 2015), at curb-sides on residential streets (similar to European practices of Germany and Italy) though in Australia parking is generally regulated to accommodate day use only (Lakes Post 2015).

Not all freedom camping takes place in public places. With approximately 85% of the Australian population having had a caravan or camping experience in their life, 66% of this activity occurs in commercial caravan parks (CIAA, 2014). The balance is spread across a range of alternatives on the Australian campsite matrix (see Figure 11) including low-cost unregulated private spaces such as those promoted through share-economy start-up business (e.g. Campr.com 2017; Farmgate Mate 2017; HomeCamp.com.au 2016; Youcamp.com 2015), together with staying with friends and relatives; and not least, staying for free in a bush camp or on the side of the road (Tourism Research Australia 2012, 2016b).

The spatiality of road networks combined with the domestic and work agency of the modern and self-contained RV facilitate opportunities for “new” spaces of and for leisure and work as freedom campers increasingly return to the highways for in-transit camping places and/or alternate places of temporary destination domicile (see Caldicott & Harris 2015c; Caldicott et al. 2017b; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a). ‘Modern leisure is a constituting factor in the politics of specific places by making and resisting claims on the meaning and use of spaces, claims that often collide with one another as well as with non-recreational uses and meanings’ (Butler 2004, p. 363).

3.5 Discussion

The descriptions offered for the market segments (neo-tribes) through this thesis, particularly by RV styles, RV accommodation modes and the RVing market segments (see Appendix 1) are presented in the wake of no universal alternatives despite the growing but still fragmented literature informing them (see Brayley & Obst 2010; Brighthouse Consulting 2013; Brooker & Joppe 2013; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b; Caldicott et al. 2014b; Garner 2013; GPSC 3 Committee 2014; Hardy et al. 2013a; New Zealand Parliament 2011; Queensland Ombudsman 2006; Tourism
Research Australia 2013). Consequently, I tender the characteristics for this thesis accepting that opportunity for overlap and outliers exist at all levels and mutual exclusivity is not prescribed, particularly at the international level. Rather, it is the fluidity of the cultural sub-grouping of RVers as neo-tribes “other” than tribes that allows, for instance, middle class families and international tourists, that otherwise are thoroughly mainstream to society, to move in and out of the ‘othered’ neo-tribe at will. They are neither tribally contained nor suppressed by the classical trio of gender, race or capital class in their behaviour. However, three common elements do bind the heterogeneous segments. First, is the choice of travellers to use an RV as a form of accommodation; second, the choice in vehicles themselves; and finally, the choice of site or camping space to match the experience and identity desired are all deliberate choices. In the words of Hardy & Gretzel (2011) ‘RVing is not just a form of accommodation or transportation. It is essentially a self-centred activity that fulfils a desire to experience a sense of freedom [and for some] while realising a lifelong dream’ (p. 206).

Caravanners, whatever their differing motivations and life’s devotions, are nonetheless presented with an array of collective dilemmas. Southerton et al. (2003) suggest ‘it is the way in which these are addressed and resolved that provides a further, finer grained, system of social distinction within the caravanning world’. While recognising that not all caravanners fit precisely into the taxonomy (Figure 9), it remains useful in highlighting the different forms of consumption, lifestyle and sociocultural use of space which caravanning as a form of nomadic travel involves. However, Iso-Ahola (1980) warns that prolonged exposure to multiple cultural praxis can lead to feelings of social saturation for some global life-style travellers. Gergen (2009) conceptualises this as multiphrenia, the feeling of being overwhelmed because there are too many things to do and not enough time to do them or the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investments. This syndrome is relative to and supportive of D’Andrea’s (2007) empirical work on psyche deterritorialisation or the severance of social, political, or cultural practices from their native places and populations. Put simply, deterritorialisation may occur when individuals, even if voluntarily, are placed into an environment where control and order are foreign to them. Deleuze and Guattari (1972) use deterritorialisation to label the freeing of labour-power from unambiguous means of production. For example, English peasants were banished by the Enclosure Acts (1709–1869) from common land when it was enclosed for private landlords (the landed society; see Thompson 2013). The consequences of restricted access under various guises in a range of international settings continues to generate contests over resources for present-day freedom campers (the un-landed society) while ever they present as mobile residents within an “other”-wise sedentary society.
Iso-Ahola (1980) thus cautions against the intuitive perception that the more alternatives a person has the more freedoms they would feel they possess. In contrast, she suggests too many options can become confusing as opposed to liberating (see also Cohen 2010). Consequently, caravanning, as a chosen lifestyle performs juxtaposing roles; both ‘binding together’ and ‘differentiating’ sub-groups, all of whom fall under the umbrella term “caravanners” (Southerton et al. 2003, p. 3) with some long-term freedom campers in fact being ‘tied to’ their mobile homes rather than being ‘detached from’ a traditional sedentary one (Cohen 2004, p.51). This latter group remain further marginalised from conventional tourists as, ‘by living on the road, they question the binary opposition between staying put and being in motion – home and travel’ (Kannisto 2014, p.22). For them, both are intertwined as ‘they are at home wherever they happen to be’ (p. 2) (see also Caldicott et al. 2017a).

The degree of freedom that RVers describe is partly illusory. ‘They cannot stop anywhere, cannot use just any site or spontaneously adopt patterns of behaviour (Southerton et al. 2003, p. 8). Regardless of any laissez-faire outside-of-society collective norms, they are still subject to the formal inside-of-society rules of the chosen location. RVers underestimate the way which they have “absorbed” and “voluntarily” reproduced joint norms of caravanning communities to which they associate. (Southerton et al. 2003). The physical limitations associated with leisure RVing produces some cohesions of circumstances and practices among those who partake. The paradox though, according to Foucault (1984), is that everyday living is usually conducted in controlled environments. McKerron (2003, pp. 1-2) suggests:

Modern day tourists, therefore, could be seeking both the excitement of breaking away from the rigidity of the identities performed in the “real world” of the tourist’s home and looking for emotional bonding found in communities [their RVing neo-tribes]. On holidays [on the road] they are looking for what they lack at home.

It’s about freedom of choice for freedom campers – the freedom to choose the constraints that they are prepared to accept. That is, to take a critical distance to the type of subjectification that is linked to the state as the dominant subject position (Foucault 1982, 2002), an attitude he labels critique (Foucault 1997). Critique faces the arts of governing head on, ‘as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, of finding a way to escape from them’ (pp. 44-45). Critique must be a challenge to governmentalisation, a challenge to static and institutionally secured domination. Further, freedom is the ‘art of not being governed quite so much’ (Foucault 1997, p. 45) or as drawn from Kannisto (2014), freedoms could be considered ‘constraints that produce added value when costs
of the constraints are taken into account’ (p. 224). As a citizen, not wanting to be governed so much means ‘challenging the authority or legitimacy of the rule in the higher power of natural law (Chambers 2001, p. 116). By demonstration, the National Motorhome Association in the UK pursued their defiance to “No Motor Caravan Camping” through civil processes of LCC and their challenge was successfully upheld (Strangeway 2014a).

Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of freedom campers, albeit their diverse backgrounds and demographics they still do institutionalise. The voluntary and independent daily choices that they make from self-definition and self-identity, and thus conformity to a set description and “rules” of the neo-tribe, unites them through their common practices (Cohen 2010; Giddens 1991). For Giddens, practices are routine-driven configurations of activities shared by groups of people as part of their everyday life and lifestyles. Practices therefore are the core of study according to Giddens (1984): ‘the basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ordered across space and time’ (p. 2).

Borrowing from an analogy with backpacking, it may seem contradictory that freedom camping is following backpacking ‘into mainstream and quickly becoming part of the same mass-tourism industry from which both backpackers and freedom campers seek to marginalise themselves’ (Cohen 2004, p.49; d’Andrea 2006, p.99; O’Reilly 2006, p.1006; Richards 2015). Because caravanning involves ‘the occupation of land [private or public] for which the site owner [may] requires a commercial rent, it also entails the sharing of quasi-public space (Martens & Warde 1997) and obedience to a set of rules or conventions governing use of that space’ (Bianchi 2003; Southerton et al. 1998, p. 9). These shared constraints do not lead all RVing types to react in the same way. As shown, through definition, there are significant differences in perception, purpose and use of both site (space) and caravan (artefact) by different types (identity) of caravanners (Caldicott & Harris 2015b). It is the different reactions to the common characteristics of caravanning that Southerton et al., (2003, p. 9) suggest ‘informs and generates classifications of practices which permit location of self and others within the social worlds of caravanning’.

Here I make another parallel connection, that between road-tripping RVers and open ocean yacht cruisers. Macbeth (2000) suggests the structures and rules of modern society that require conformity to the mass is unacceptable to the cruiser. Their similarities to RVers are of being mobile and anchored at the same time; as independent tourists cruising the high seas or cruising the highways as a way of life. Some may say ‘a life of hardship and insecurity counterbalanced by
powerful intrinsic rewards’ (p. 20); the Utopian lifestyle. Their cruising aims to avoid the impersonal city and the mass societal routines that dominate urban life. Macbeth (2000) describes a sensation of loss of self-reliance as ocean cruisers wallow within this mass society progressively losing the ability to act independently of organisations, and institutions, and of the goods acquired to operate in modern society:

Cruisers see an institutional pressure to conform; they see the iterated structures of urban life as reducing autonomy and independence, of forcing conformity to the ever increasing demands of technological and bureaucratic efficiency. Their political critique of modern society embodies a traditional liberalism and an anti-military (industrialised) flavour’ (p. 29).

Poignantly, while this critique would reject the global dominance of the market economy and global business, ocean cruisers and highway RVers also depend on institutions and industrial “system” for spare parts, GPS navigation signals and provisioning. Thus, while they may have a fundamental preference and deep respect for nature and natural systems, Macbeth (2000) prompts that ‘their way of life is not totally independent of industrial production often needing the city and its industrial services to re-provision, repair and reconnect with family or friends’ (p. 30) before moving back to the freedom of the open ocean and isolated anchorages or the open road and freedom camping places. Freedom campers, likened to the ocean yacht cruisers described by Macbeth (2000), backpackers by Richards (2015) or global nomads by Kannisto (2014), are targets who avoid familiar structures and networked agents associated with institutionalised tourism, instead finding their own way through the warrens of sedentary societies. With regard to the motivation for travel, Gyr (2010, p. 6) highlights the transitioning development in tourism and travel, one he observes to be ‘an ‘important process with long-term repercussions’. Travelling and wandering was increasingly becoming ‘a means of confronting oneself and achieving self-realisation’ (p. 6).

The key demands that drive a freedom camper’s utopian ideals are a keen sense of their own power. They take charge of their own lives and destiny building self-reliance and independence (DTV 2011; Gyr 2010; Kannisto 2014; Southerton et al. 2003). Freedom campers, like their sea faring compatriots ‘value private and personal space, minimise material excess and waste, and reject centralisation, especially the power of large organisations’ thus ‘discovering and engaging in alternate use spaces that facilitate and satisfy their desires for self-creativity, self-sufficiency, self-containment, and public rejection all at the same time’ (Macbeth 2000, p. 30) and crafting the contest of space (Bianchi 2003).
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the complexity of networks and language (jargon) that dominate planning and policy environments for freedom camping. The taxonomy of caravanning seeks to untangle the “web of power” and provide clear foundations for studying the politics of freedom camping policy in Australia. The accompanying discourse aids understanding of the “other” in caravanning. The chapter addresses the first objective of this thesis placing the domestic freedom camping position within an international context. Framed within gaze theory the taxonomy was operationally underpinned by theories of experiential agency, recreational specialisation and networked sociality. Presented across four sections the taxonomy offers labels for market segments within pre-trip determiners, before camping styles and motivations were introduced. Under an umbrella snapshot of international policy discourse the camper continuum from hard core commercial to hard core freedom proposed a site typology to reveal a “new” market segment of “swinging” campers. Finally there was a summary discussion drawing cursorily on the theories of power. Foucault reminds ‘that everyday living is usually conducted in controlled environs’ and freedom campers, as citizen not wanting to be governed so much are ‘challenging the authority or legitimacy of the rule in the higher power of natural law’ (Foucault 1997, p. 45). The next chapter will further focus on legislative development within the Australian domestic caravanning scene, particularly tracing the path for freedom camping in Australia from 1900 through to present day as interpreted through a framework of guiding legislation.
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces an original framework conceptualising freedom camping through four periods of incremental policy adjustment (Table 3). It gives indication to the turning points in freedom camping history - enabling, constraining, acknowledging, and facilitating/trialling - between 1900 and 2017. In seeking to address the second objective of the thesis, Table 3 summaries the legislative developments of freedom camping in Australia, focusing particularly on historic elements of supply and demand since Federation (1900) generally and with reference to the impact of auto-mobilisation on the practice specifically.

Each period, as presented across sections 4.2 to 4.5, is characterised by reform in state legislation, policy, regulation, guideline or other focusing events. First, there was a very long period of enabling (1900-1986) in which freedom camping was seen as an integral part of Australian culture and an accepted behaviour. The enabling period was followed by a much shorter 20 year period (1986-2006) of constraining legislation that focused on the health, hygiene and welfare of site environments and tenants living in caravan parks through prescribed standards. Following the constraining period was an even tighter eight years (2006-2014) of (re)acknowledging freedom camping. This period was dominated by multiple state-level parliamentary inquiries that sought to understand tourism and its impacts, including those from freedom camping, on local communities. Finally, the four most recent years (2013/14-2017) produced a broadening continuance of state-level acknowledgement and an unprecedented level of proactive local government facilitation and trialling of camping alternatives in response to the developing freedom camping phenomenon.

The discussion (section 4.6) conceptualises the focus of each of the state-level parliamentary inquiries of the acknowledging period to highlight the “breakthrough” in policy adjustment via statutory guidelines for a “new” category of camping and caravan park. Section 4.7 concludes the Chapter by acknowledging how societal pressures have continued to influence incremental legislative reform in planning and policy for freedom camping since Federation.
Table 3 - Conceptualising freedom camping through four periods of policy activity
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Significance of the period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enabling</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Roadside and Crown land reserve camping was considered the norm in Australia’s pioneering history. Initially to accompany livestock then in the absence of commercial camping venues for trade and pleasure travel through car-camping. Many Crown land caravan and camping parks have their origins in these public camping reserves and travelling stock routes. Enabling legislations were premised on Land, Health and Motor Vehicle Acts. Caravans (RVs) superseded the humble tent post World War II and were popularised for leisure. They were also viewed sceptically in some communities as caravanners were considered transient residents that threatened the moral standards of society. Toward the end of the period some caravan parks became unlawful de facto housing estates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraining</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Long-term living in caravan parks was presented by a Joint Local Government, Planning, and Housing Officials Working Group as part-remedy to the national housing crisis developing through the late 1970s and early 1980s. Augmentation triggered a raft of new legislations nationally to legalise the permanent residence provision and increase tenant welfare in parks. Unintended consequences were increased compliance costs for park operators and reduced site capacities for mobile travellers. The period was punctuated by national competition policy (NCP) which underpinned public enquiries made with regard to competition between public and private camping operations. Freedom camping was gaining popularity among a segment of the camping market displaced or disenfranchised by the rise in permanent residency within caravan parks and also increased site fees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Divisions began to appear between the states with the governments of Victoria (2006), Western Australia (2009) and Queensland (2011) recognising new investment opportunity through freedom camping following separate state parliamentary enquires. New local government acts were introduced in NSW (2009) and Qld (2012) respectively providing Councils with greater authority to make bylaws for freedom camping independent of the state. The government of New South Wales was slower to react only instigating an inquiry into tourism in rural areas in 2013 with recommendations in 2014 for the State to develop guidelines around camping in self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles on public land. The inquiries pioneered recognition that the camping (RV) market had shifted and a broader suite of camping options was required in response. Local governments across Australia began to experiment with authorised ‘trials’ of freedom camping within public places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendations from the state parliamentary inquiries sought to minimise regulatory restrictions on business and communities that want to attract RV travellers. Queensland’s Camping Options Tool Kit (2014) provides guidelines to local governments wishing to facilitate development of basic low-cost facilities to capture the freedom camper market. In 2015, Western Australia progressed to the second round of legislative reviews for holiday parks and nature based camping grounds producing guidelines for developers and government with very clear market focused mandates. A raft of local governments across every state started systematically integrating freedom camping into their tourism and economic strategic planning in contrast to maintaining regulatory prohibition of the practice. Commercial caravan parks associations continued to lobby governments (local, state and national) for a level playing field in regards to camp ground compliance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 The enabling period (1900-1986)

Table 4 highlights events that affected the freedom camping discourse across the enabling period. Prior to 1900, Australia was governed through a mix of independent British colonies. In 1900, it was proclaimed under the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900, a federal Commonwealth (Australian Parliament 1900). The Act, when operationalised in 1901, effectively repealed the Colonial Boundaries Act 1895, so as to unite the separate British colonies of Australia to become States of the Australian Commonwealth. The Commonwealth became a self-governing colony for the purposes of that Act. With respect to freedom camping, Australia is a Commonwealth of states but still very much remains an archipelago of camping legislations and regulations and local laws. The Federation era was also an era of auto-mobilisation in Australia.

By definition for this thesis, freedom camping is associated with motor vehicles and or their towed attachments as recreational vehicles (Blichfeldt & Mikkelsen 2016; Caldicott et al. 2017b; Caldicott et al. 2014b). Much of the post Federation legislation with influence on freedom camping is linked with motor vehicles – both in relation to mobility (movable vehicles or structures on wheels) and regulation (several motor traffic and land Acts). For example, in NSW the Western Lands Act 1901, the Government Motor Omnibus Act 1905 and the Motor Traffic Act 1909 were complimented in Qld by the Brisbane Traffic Act 1908 and Land Act of 1910. The land acts have regard for the proclamation and laws relating to road reserves and non-freehold land, inclusive of the Travelling Stock Route (TSR) network. Each of the land tenures continue to be commonly used for recreational purposes inclusive of freedom camping.

Freedom camping within ‘travelling stock’ legislative provision, was innocently introduced in NSW as early as 1901 through the Western Land Act, in particular Schedule 1, s.18 (l) which affirms the Minister’s unrestricted right to ‘withdraw any land for the purposes of roads or travelling stock, camping or other reserve’ (New South Wales Government 1901, p. 46). Successive legislations across each state and territory continued to recognise the right to camp on lands withdrawn for such purposes. For example in NSW, pursuant to the provision contained in section one hundred and six of the Pasture Protections Act 1912:

...the right of the lessee or licensee of any land within which such routes or camping places are situate is not to impound any travelling stock or bring any action for trespass in respect thereof (New South Wales Parliament 1913).
### Table 4 - Critical turning-points for freedom camping in the enabling period (1900-1986)

Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code*</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Western Lands Act.</td>
<td>Vested unrestricted right in the Crown to proclaim roads, travelling stock routes, camping or other reserves and to withdraw land from leaseholders for such purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Local Authorities Act.</td>
<td>Vested power to municipality’s to self-manage certain civic functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Local Government Act.</td>
<td>Further vested power to municipality’s to self-manage independent of the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1908</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>The Brisbane Traffic Act.</td>
<td>Responded to public anxiety caused by the more frequent appearance of the motor car, reckless driving and pedestrian injury.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Land Act.</td>
<td>Amended the law relating to the management of non-freehold land inclusive of road reserves and the travelling stock network, both commonly used for recreational purposes inclusive of camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Pasture Protections Act.</td>
<td>Prescribed the minimum daily travel distance and maximum length of stay at stock reserves appearing to be the foundation of 20-72 hour maximum stays still enforced at national highway rest areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Local Government Act.</td>
<td>Criticised as the final decisions in civic governance still rested with the Governor-in-council or the Minister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Health Act 1937 (Campgrounds Regulation) Amendment 1949.</td>
<td>Served to improved hygiene at many municipal camps on Crown reserves, specifically in the provision of potable water and sanitary facilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Light Green = Enabling (E); Red = Constraining (C); Yellow = Acknowledging (A); Dark Green = Facilitating/Trialling (F)
The tradition of “camping out” along the travelling stock routes continues today (Garner 2010; Hawkins 2014b). The passing of time and the passing of the different individual legislations across the various states has not dampened the appetite for public place camping. Despite a number of state inquiries (see acknowledging period - this Chapter) and policy positions put forward by independent governments, their agencies, and interest groups, the strength of feeling among campers towards their “perception of right” to publicly camp, has not wavered from those early pioneering days.

For example in Victoria, the rest area within the Franklin River Reserve which was originally gazetted for the purpose of “Camping and Watering” as early as April 1887 (POI Australia 2016) remains a popular RV overnight stopping place. The stock route camping tradition continues to be celebrated Australia-wide, both privately through independent freedom camping and also publicly through organised RV events such as the Boggabri Lions Club’s annual Drovers Campfire in NSW (The Courier 2015). This RV event, purposely drawing upon the nostalgia of stock route camping, directly targets grey nomads as they migrate north for their annual winter pilgrimage. The nomad acceptance of specific time restrictions, 12-72 hours, for camping at contemporary public camping places also appears to have its roots within the drovers’ statute provisions – again referenced within the NSW Pasture Protections Act 1912. Div. 4, s. 107(2) which states:

Travelling Stock - Unless bona fide prevented by rain or a flood, or other unavoidable cause, such stock, if sheep, shall be moved six miles, and if horses or cattle ten miles, at least, in one and the same direction during every successive period of 24 hours from six o’clock in the morning of one day to six o’clock in the morning of the following day (New South Wales Government 1912).

The rationale for continuous forward movement of stock (i.e. maximum hours stay at the camping reserve) was twofold: first, it ensured big mobs did not over-graze the pasture at the camping sites in particular and also in general along the stock route; and, second, it recognised that other mobs were trailing, possibly only one day’s walk behind. The continuous travel keeps separation between mobs while protecting the environment from overstocking. The same principles when applied to freedom camping also mitigate aspects of overcrowding and environmental degradation at popular camping reserves. The legislative intent for the reserves being primarily for rest and overnight provision - not long-term occupation.

The *Motor Traffic Acts c.1905-09* introduced regulation of motor vehicles and their drivers - both in respect of constraints to their operation and use of particular classes of vehicle. The legacy of many such regulations and constraints still apply to recreational vehicles, their drivers and their
operation for transport and as freedom camping accommodation on the reserves and in local communities. The *Local Authorities Act 1902 (Qld)* and the *Local Government Act 1906 (NSW)* empowered communities to form an elected council to manage municipalities in urban areas and to initiate shires in unincorporated areas. Councils were given primary powers by the state to make orders and bylaws, build and maintain transport infrastructure, establish schools and collect local taxes (Dredge 2001a). The elected council, with its source of power derived from the primary and permissive functions devolved from the state, introduced the notion of representative government at the community level. Their primary functions were those of an obligatory nature clearly intended to promote public infrastructure development. Permissive functions were discretionary only (with consent of Minister) and directed at servicing the recreation and cultural needs of community (Dredge 2001a). The elected council, with its source of power derived from the primary and permissive functions devolved from the state, introduced the notion of representative government at the community level. Their primary functions were those of an obligatory nature clearly intended to promote public infrastructure development. Permissive functions were discretionary only (with consent of Minister) and directed at servicing the recreation and cultural needs of community (Dredge 2001a). The state government still retained control over all powers and functions of councils and had the right to intervene in local affairs and dismiss councils (Pearson 1994). This state preference for centralised control and intervention in local government meant councils had limited capacity to determine their own course. Evolved communities demanded additional services in order to foster healthy, safe, pleasant, prosperous and attractive environments that allowed residents to pursue a wide variety of lifestyles (Dredge 2001a; Marshall 1997). The introduction of the *1919 Local Government Act (NSW)* sought to widen the permissive powers of local government that, in effect, among other functions meant councils could make their community attractive as a tourist destination (Painter 1993).

Be it for tourism, lifestyle or housing, the caravan in the early half of the 20th Century was not taken seriously. Certainly it was not seen as a threat to the conventionally accepted tent camping and later motor-camping that commonly occurred on public reserves and certainly outside of any formal regulated camping sites. Local newspapers reported ‘... it is hardly likely that the caravan will supersede the humbler forms of camping in future years …’ (Tweed Daily News 1939, p. 4). Consequently, caravans and caravan dwellers initially were not readily accepted into Australian society. Because they were seen to be different to the hosts, integration and assimilation was blocked by the authoritative bodies, specifically through town planning provisions that in 1945 were inserted into the *1919 Local Government Act*. These provisions gave the local councils ‘power to prepare town planning schemes and control all new development and land use’ (Schools NSW 2015).

The exclusion experience for Australian caravanners mirrors that for eastern European gypsies flooding into the Netherlands in the early 20th Century (Lucassen 1991). However, by the middle of the 20th Century the importance of the caravan, both for mobile living and holiday pleasure,
was gaining prominence. The earlier stigma coined by Lucassen (1991, p. 83) as ‘the caravan problem’ and symbolising a nomadic lifestyle was somewhat dissipating. There were public calls for formalised caravan sites to be established with the projection that ‘... the day is not far distant when all municipal councils should and will make provision for caravanners’ (Porter 1949, p. 15).

Mobile housing within caravans and subsequently caravan parks became popular through the 1950s and 1960s with subsequent amendments to local government acts and health acts serving to improve hygiene in camping grounds and caravan parks (see Qld Health Act 1937 - Campgrounds Regulation - Amendment 1949) and also to eliminate the need for numerous state approvals to be obtained by councils in exercising their functions (see NSW Local Government Act 1919 Amendments c.1965-86). By the mid-1970s the then prime minister, the Hon Gough Whitlam commissioned a Report on Housing (Priorities Review Staff 1975) which devoted a chapter to comparing the relativities between the USA and Australia for the development of mobile home parks. Further, in 1975 the Victorian Minister for Tourism commissioned an inquiry into caravan and camping at the state level recognising the illegal existence of long-term residency in caravan parks:

The [Inquiry] committee is of the opinion that long-term caravanning is a fact of life and is growing rapidly as the housing shortage intensifies and the mobility of the workforce expands (Caravan and Camping Park Committee of Inquiry 1975, p. 44).

By 1983 the legal status of long-term park living was under scrutiny by governments aware that considerable differences existed between local government areas and between states as to the foundational rights of people living in caravan parks (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004). The Victorian Committee of Review found that long-term caravan park dwellers suffered tenancy discrimination compared to conventional housing tenants (Committee of Review on Long-Term Residency in Caravan Parks 1983). While defacto relationships entered with individual parks permitted them to occupy a caravan site, there was undetermined permission for park residents to remain:

Rather than allowing long-stay and enforcing requirements applied to conventional housing, authorities have traditionally prohibited but not enforced long-term living in caravan parks (JLGPHOWG 1986, p. 2).

Despite the ambiguities within local controls, the Joint Local Government, Planning and Housing Officials Working Group (JLGPHOWG) report noted that state caravanning regulations had been developed within an environment of prohibition on long-term living in caravan parks. Notwithstanding the prohibition, permanent occupancy of caravan parks was shown to be growing, with living units getting bigger (Wensing et al. 2003), resulting in the effect of reduced
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

site capacities for mobile caravanning (Caldicott 2011b, 2012; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a). From 1986 onward, mobile caravanning generally and freedom camping particularly endured somewhat of a roller-coaster ride from the revered (enabled), to the reviled (constrained) before entering periods of respective contest (acknowledgement and facilitation). These latter three positions are further presented below.

4.3 The constraining period (1986-2006)

Table 5 highlights events that affected the freedom camping discourse across the constraining period. The Commonwealth commissioned Joint Local Government Planning and Housing Working Group (JLGPHOWG 1986) report, comparing housing accommodation experiences across the various states, was the catalyst to a significant constraining turning point in freedom camping’s national history. Through the next 20 years of the constraining period (1986 – 2006) a raft of successive legislative reforms occurred across all states of Australia. The reforms fully focused on increasing capacity for low-cost housing, increasing health and welfare standards for tenants, increasing tenancy rights, and evolved building codes to accommodate long-term occupation of caravan parks. The introduction of the Local Government (Movable Dwellings) Amendment Act 1986, and specifically Ordinance No.71, legalised permanent living in NSW caravan parks. Similar legislative reform followed in the other states.

This radical policy shift increased capacity for static low-cost housing within existing caravan parks and also spawned the manufacturing of relocatable homes and further, the development of purpose built manufactured-home estates. The latter attracting their own specific legislation that regulated further for permanent living in parks. Successive legislations included the: Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (NSW); the Health Act 1937 (Campgrounds Regulation) Amendment (Qld); and, the Mobile Homes Act 1989 (Qld). Additionally, the design and construction specifications for relocatable homes and park cabins was transferred through this period away from the state-based motor traffic acts (structures on wheels) across to the 1990 Building Code of Australia at the national level. Development consents to construct new parks, or to make alterations within existing parks, were now required to meet much more stringent conditions as prescribed by respective state environmental planning policy, specifically within NSW was SEPP 21 – Caravan Parks.

The unplanned consequences of these new legislations included increased compliance costs for park operators and decreasing site capacities for mobile RV tourists (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a). Additionally, this period was punctuated by NCP (see Hilmer et al. 1993).
### Table 5 - Critical turning-points for camping in the constraining period (1986 - 2006)

Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code*</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Local Government (Movable Dwellings) Amendment Act 1986 - Ordinance No. 71.</td>
<td>Introduced provision of a legal basis for long-term residence on caravan parks by repealing the restrictive time limitations for site occupancy, the interpretation of &quot;structures&quot; to remove their requirement of wheels for the purpose of motor registration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Residential Tenancies Act.</td>
<td>Provided park residents similar rights and protections as tenants of off-park properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Health Act 1937 (Campgrounds Regulation) Amendment.</td>
<td>Introduced &quot;Cabin&quot; into the legislation to mean a relocatable home, building or fixed structure used continuously for human habitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Mobile Homes Act.</td>
<td>Defined mobiles home as building, distinct from structure on wheels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Ombudsmen Report.</td>
<td>Reviewed the conduct of public caravan parks by councils (Barcaldine and Blackall cases) as unfair competition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Light Green = Enabling | Green = Constraining | Yellow = Acknowledging | Dark Green = Facilitating/Trialling
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

In its broadest sense, ‘competition policy encompasses all policy dealing with the extent and nature of competition in the economy’ (p. xvi). However, in a practical sense NCP is designed to restrict private enterprise collusion among specialised elites and promote peaceful competition and compromise between elites in politics and the marketplace. In a public sector sense, NPC calls for transparency of public subsidisation of equivalent services that can be adequately provided by the private sector in the same market economy.

The caravan parks’ associations use NCP through their lobbies to protect the position of their members as suppliers of commercial RVing accommodation sites. Thus any real choices, outside of the private sector, are considered by them as unfair competition. Any development of alternative choices such as public showgrounds and recreation reserves (Figure 14) or even any serious discussion and consideration of other freedom camping venues that effectively experience lesser compliance and fee subsidisation by councils is strongly discouraged by the private sector. Freedom campers defend the subsidisation on the basis of market failure (Schumpeter 1947; Sinn 1997) or ‘a departure from the market equilibrium that would have been obtained in its absence’ (Bjornstad & Brown 2004, p. 16). To some, says Bjornstad and Brown ‘it is a departure from the equilibrium that a fully informed, yet benevolent and empowered, central planner could restore. Finding departure from a Pareto-optimal equilibrium, in which no party could be made better off without making some other party or parties worse off, provides a rationale for government intervention in market outcomes’ (p. 16).

The freedom camping lobby argue that the commercial parks are developing sites for high-end users with high value facilities that simply put the commercial tariff above that which the freedom camping market will bear. This highlights distinctions between private goods, those RV sites ‘which the private sector will supply because profits can be earned’, and public goods, as those RV sites ‘which will generally not be supplied because insufficient profits can be earned’ (Bjornstad & Brown 2004, p. 5). The freedom campers claim therefore that government intervention, that is council provision of freedom camping site, is justified as the sites are operating within a completely different marketplace to profit orientated commercial park operators, thus there is no direct competition.

NCP was the trigger to an associated Queensland inquiry into public showground caravan parks (Queensland Ombudsman 2006), and other freedom camping places in Tasmania (LGAT 2012b). The inquiries were made with regards to unfair competition between public (council) and private (entrepreneurial) camping operations. Though councils were found not to be in breach of NCP
through the operation of their showgrounds for camping, the inquiries recommended that councils present a higher degree of transparency through full-cost attribution and disclose same when supplying alternate (ratepayer subsidised) public camping venues.

Many public camping operations occur on Crown reserves that, through instruments such as the 1989 Crown Land Act in NSW, have had “camping” rights transitioned forward from their origins within earlier land and pasture protection acts. In Queensland, for example, the 1994 Land Amendment Act assigned responsibility for the travelling stock routes across to local government as trustee. In NSW, the Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act of 2002, consolidated earlier redundant acts (e.g. Land Act 1994; Transport and Infrastructure Act 1994;
Stock Act 1915) and ensured all camping rights and dedications were preserved. Additionally, introduction of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), which was much less prescriptive than the 1919 Act, gave councils the power to engage in a wider and varied range of activities though subject to community consultation and resource constraint. In respect to freedom camping, while the changes allowed councils to independently or cooperatively explore unique and innovative ways in which to support tourism, the progress of public place camping was still perceived by many communities as “deviant” activity (Cohen 1972, 2002; Geiger 2015, 2016) prompting levels of “moral panic” (Critcher et al. 2013) and a no-tolerance stance was adopted within these communities (see Chapter 5- Byron Bay).

Despite the preservation of statutes for camping on public land across all states, the volume of legislative reform for commercial camping (and living) across the constraining period defines the states’ move away from an environment of publicly facilitated camping. However, just as the prohibition of permanent living on-park did not quell such activity prior to it legislative facilitation in 1986, nor did the disquiet on freedom camping slow its growth off-park across the period. There were a number of triggers that continued to escalate freedom camping. The Local Government (Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Amendment Regulation 1998 (NSW) and further Regulation 2005 relaxed rules around the requirement for caravan parks to maintain a majority of sites for short-term occupation (i.e. tourist sites). Park operators immediately sought to maximise site returns and minimise cash flow cycles through further expansion of long-term living zones within parks to accommodate the growing demand for static low-cost housing (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a; Wedgewood 2009). This sent site capacity for mobile and transient RVing spiralling downward (Caldicott 2011b), a further unintended consequence.

The effects of long-term living in caravan parks were not immediately apparent and certainly not the sole catalysis for the declining number of short-term tourist sites. Other pressures to site capacity included rising land values that made caravan parks prime targets for alternative commercial development (Caldicott 2012; Prideaux & McClymont 2006; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004). In specific locations the relaxed rules (deregulation) saw RV campers displaced. Dislocation was most evident in coastal centres that naturally suffer from high property price entry barriers and are also attractive to sea change retirees. Unfortunately, these same hotspot locations are similarly attractive to low-cost campers who find site capacities reduced and fees on available sites increased to levels beyond perceived fair value. Such disequilibrium (market failure) pushed segments of a displaced and disenfranchised market onto the “streets” and into freedom camping, a situation that caused Caldicott (2011b, p. 1) to ask – ‘Where the bloody hell will they all go?’
Freedom campers in the first decade of the 21st Century found themselves in an eerily comparable environment to those petitioning for permanent caravan park living in the 1970s and 1980s. However, with the new planning controls geared primarily towards permanent caravan park occupation, policy catering for alternate camping lifestyles was absent. Two further unplanned consequences arose from this situation. First, market competition between static dwellers and mobile dwellers arose for the limited caravan park sites. Second, societal acceptance of on-park living grew but reprisal of off-park camping escalated, again prompting Caldicott (2013, p. 1) to pose that freedom camping was moving beyond an ‘Aussie leisure tradition’ towards a ‘messy policy problem for public land managers in regional Australia’. The significance of the Crown land reserves, including the travelling stock routes, were once again becoming a critical feature in the landscape of freedom campers. Campers no longer felt comfortable in restrictive environments of the commercial parks nor value in their high commercial fees. Freedom campers began to exploit the provision of “camping places” transitioned from the Crown Lands Consolidation Act 1913 (NSW) through successive amendments to the Crown Lands Act 1989 (NSW).

The crisis of freedom camping and the plight therefore of freedom campers in the early 2000s was afflicted by similar social, economic and political environments that caused the JLGPHOWG to compare housing accommodation experiences two decades earlier. Tension was building for future policy adjustment accommodating of the escalating freedom camping phenomenon. A critical need emerged for greater affordable site capacities catering to mobile RVers rather than only the further provisioning for static low-cost housing. The strain grew between commercial parks and councils over public supply of alternate camping places often on Crown reserve trust land; at the local showgrounds for example. Exacerbating the tensions, ‘most local governments provided some infrastructure for road-side camping such as rest stops, waste water disposal points and rubbish facilities’ (DEEDI 2010, p. 11) to encourage RVers to stop, stay and “pay” for local services in the towns. Short-term camping, ranging between 12 -72 hours, remained permissible under main roads’ legislation at designated highway rest areas in Queensland (and the other states) providing it did not adversely affect the rest area’s primary function – a mandate of fatigue management for all road users. However, the increasing demand for road-side camping was placing increased stress on the ability of local councils and roads and transport agencies to deliver such facilities (DEEDI 2011).

Free main-road sites and council sponsored low-cost showground sites continued to raise the ire of commercial caravan park operators across Australia through this constraining period. The concept of camping returning to a lifestyle of choice, of freedom on the road and of national
heritage for some (Garner 2010; Hawkins 2014a), continued to be seen by others as an abhorrent, deviant, illegal and immoral tourist activity (Cohen 2002; Gardiner 2012; Geiger 2015). Proponents of the latter view showed little consideration for the concept and revival of nomadism as a form of full-time living (d’Andrea 2006; Kannisto 2014; Richards 2015), and as a lifestyle of choice. However, nomads are residents (Caldicott et al. 2017a), albeit mobile with their ‘everyday life in the tourist zone’ (Holloway & Holloway 2011, p. 1). To describe those permanently on the road as permanently on holidays is a misnomer. Commenting on ‘Have your say on camping’ (in Burgess 2015), Frandon Smith (23 November) says:

   The thought of an ever ending camping holiday maybe a romantic notion but actually it is not recognising it as a lifestyle. We are not looking for a free holiday but actually living our normal lives with its attendant costs, budgets, and commitments. We are not operating on a holiday budget.

And Fred Whitford (also 23 November, 2015) suggests there appears to be little thought or understanding of the difference between a holiday maker and the nomadic tourist:

   The holiday maker has saved for a set time holiday – arrives, does their thing, usually at or from a commercial establishment then goes home. This group is well catered for. The nomadic tourist will be looking for space where they can park their unit, be it large caravan, including 5th wheelers, motorhomes or other big rig. The needs of the nomadic group are entirely different. They are often not on a time schedule, they shop and buy their supplies from the local community. Their units are self-sufficient and self-contained. They don’t want to be squeezed into a space near another RV. I don’t use a commercial premise as they have nothing that I need.

The aim therefore, of any future policy settings to accommodate the widening market of freedom campers, inclusive but certainly beyond the grey nomads, could do worse than replicate the 1986 JLGPHOWG housing endeavour which was to promote ‘equity, efficiency, flexibility and affordability in government regulations to protect the safety, health and amenity of all individuals in the community’ (JLGPHOWG 1986, p. 2). Accepting the growing disparities across several tourism sectors individual state governments proceeded to parliamentary inquiries to uncover the growing concerns of interested tourism stakeholders. Description and impacts (or consequences) of those inquiries are explored next.
4.4 The acknowledging period (2006-2013/14)

Responding to constituent unrest the governments of Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales each engaged through parliamentary inquiry across the period to understand the sentiment that was driving forward or holding back tourism development in their respective states. Table 6 lists some of the impacting events across this period.

Table 6 - Critical turning points for camping in acknowledging period (2006-2013/2014)
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>State (Vic)</td>
<td>Inquiry into Rural and Regional Tourism.</td>
<td>Recommended development of road-side infrastructure to attract the motorhome and self-contained vehicle markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>State (WA)</td>
<td>Inquiry into the Provision, Use and Regulation of Caravan Parks (and Camping Grounds).</td>
<td>Recommended that local government authorities explore opportunity of RV Friendly Towns and reducing design prescriptions of new and existing caravan parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Department of Planning Circular: Operation of Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds.</td>
<td>Issued guidelines to all local governments specifically targeting “illegal” operations of showgrounds for low-cost camping in NSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Inquiry into Developing Rural and Regional Communities through Grey Nomad Tourism.</td>
<td>Acknowledged that grey nomads in campervans and motorhomes require specific though adequate facilities to travel to remote and regional areas of the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Camping Options Tool Kit.</td>
<td>Designed to assist local governments effectively manage camping alternatives in their communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>State (Qld)</td>
<td>Best-practice Guidelines for Rest Areas.</td>
<td>Identified Type “A” rest areas as those providing “limited stay” opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>State (NSW)</td>
<td>Inquiry on Tourism in Local Communities.</td>
<td>Recommended that the government develop guidelines around camping in self-contained recreational vehicles and non-self-contained vehicles on public land.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Light Green = Enabling [E]; Red = Constraining [C]; Yellow = Acknowledging [A]; Dark Green = Facilitating/Trialling [F]
Additional to the state-level parliamentary inquiries, the acknowledging period also reflects upon two further state-level initiatives giving effect to the control of freedom camping. These initiatives sought to remind local governments’ of their responsibilities in their management of freedom camping. First in NSW, the Department of Planning issued guidelines to all councils specifically targeting “illegal” operations of showgrounds for low-cost camping. Second in Tasmania, the Economic Regulator reviewed council recreational vehicle overnight camping services in regard to anticompetitive provision of low-cost camping on Crown lands before issuing a state-wide directions paper and policy guidelines for recreational vehicle camping (see section 4.4.8).

While the separate state inquiries were not specifically targeting freedom camping it became evident through the hearings that the phenomenon was contentious within communities. The social, economic and political divide developing between “sides” of the caravanning industry – commercial site suppliers and freedom camping consumers – could no longer be ignored by government. Developments across Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland are reviewed next.

**4.4.1 Victoria (2006 & 2008)**

Victoria was the first to respond to challenges in the accommodation sector in 2006 by initiating an inquiry focusing on *Caravan and Camping on Coastal Crown Lands* (Department of Sustainability & Environment 2006). The Caucus Reference Group responsible recognised that within the coastal areas there was high levels of unmet demand for caravan and camping sites. The market failure in this case was ‘exacerbated by the sale of private caravan parks for redevelopment’ (Victorian Parliament 2008, p. xv).

A further inquiry into *Rural and Regional Tourism* in Victoria was conducted in 2008. The terms of reference asked for identification of the major impediments to growth of the tourism industry. The inquiry revealed thing such as: anomalies in planning regulations; poor and inconsistent signage across the state; need for better and more connected transport infrastructure; need for training for young people; a more commercial focus by Tourism Victoria; and better research and data that focuses on regional Victoria (Victorian Parliament 2008). Recommendations with direct relevance to freedom camping focus on impediments of planning laws for the development of freedom camping infrastructure such as highway pull-off bays and dump points.

**4.4.2 Western Australia (2009)**

Western Australia’s 2009 parliamentary inquiry into the *Provision, Use, and Regulation of Caravan Parks (and Camping Grounds)* (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009) made a total of
57 recommendation to the state government. The issue relating to where people can camp received considerable attention. The 1995 Caravan Park and Camp Ground (CPCG) Act ‘restricts camping (including camping in a vehicle) to a licenced caravan park’ (p. 318) with limited exceptions. Such an exception manifests through contradictions within the Act. For example, a person is permitted to camp without justification in any designated and signed road-side rest area for 24 consecutive hours. This anomaly in the provisions of the Regulation, specifically section 11(1)(c) simply ads to consumer and enforcer confusion:

Both the Act and Regulations are effectively silent on the meaning of ‘camp’ and when it is used as a verb. The lack of a workable definition has contributed to enforcement related difficulties for local governments that have encountered issues relating to illegal camping (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009, p. 318).

The WA inquiry reported rising demand for a less regulated and more nature-based caravanning and camping accommodation as an alternative to the traditional caravan park experience. However, the absence of supply at acceptable rates ‘leads to incidences of illegal camping’ (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009, p. 312). The Committee’s response to the tendered ‘large levels of non-compliance’ camping on Crown land ‘surely means that the law is ineffective and that a different approach must be taken’, and that ‘one of the solutions to this issue is to provide more approved camping facilities’ (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009, pp. 320-321). The Committee concluded:

The issues that impact upon the provisions around free and illegal camping demonstrates that it is an extremely complex area involving many factors, some of which are outside the scope of the CPCG Act. It is a sensitive issue because it involves argument around the great Australian right to camp. It is not surprising then that the Regulations regarding where people can camp are contentious and difficult to administer, particularly in remote areas of the state (p. 321).

As the Western Australian caravan and camping legislative reform was ongoing, progress relative to the freedom camping phenomenon is further described within the facilitating/trialling period (2013/14-2017).

4.4.3 Queensland (2011)

A parliamentary inquiry into Developing Queensland’s Rural and Regional Communities through Grey Nomad Tourism was conducted in 2011 (see Morehead 2011). Concerned over aging population trends, the government’s focus was on senior populations and thus senior travellers. The controversy surrounding the characteristics of grey nomads, their behaviours and economic profile was concerning to a government dealing with an aging population. This section presents a deeper discussion on the Qld Inquiry than that presented for Vic and WA as it: first, informs
general issues relative to all states; second, highlights the data void on freedom camping; and third, cuts across the thesis study zone.

Grey nomads are the most prominent segment among freedom campers. Coined as grey nomad tourism (Onyx et al. 2010) the term has general application to retired people who enjoy a nomadic lifestyle travelling for all, or significant parts of the year (greater than 3 months). Grey nomads have taken their “nomad” title from their propensity to not stay in one place too long (DEEDI 2010, p. 4). Tourism Research Australia (2009) identified visitors over the age of 55 as the fastest growing RVing segment with an average six per cent annual growth since 2000. This supports earlier projections by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2006) and since, the Queensland Department of Employment Economic Development and Innovation (2010) that reports by 2050 the number of Australians aged 55 years and over will more than double the number in 2010 (p. 2). This exponential growth was having parallel tourism growth impacts on Queensland communities as baby-boomer retirees embraced the domestic caravan and camping lifestyle as grey nomad tourism.

Notwithstanding the absence in independently verified state-wide and regional level data about the social and economic contribution of grey nomads to communities ‘it was anticipated that the grey nomad market will continue to grow with planning for the future infrastructure and service requirements imperative’ (DEEDI 2010, p. 2). Grey nomads were identified to be different from the stereotypical traveller and driving holidaymaker:

Most travellers have an origin and a destination, taking a particular, although not always predetermined path between the two. The traveller might make a number of stops along the way, but the journey is only part of the experience and there is generally a feeling of being time poor. The holiday is bound by work, school or family commitments that put a relatively strict timeframe to the journey (Murdoch University 2005).

By contrast, Leonard et al. (2007) suggest the grey nomad is generally time rich, they have discretion over their working status and they generally are unburdened by time limits like others in society. For many grey nomads the journey is the experience they crave. As one couple described, when praising the merits of their newly purchased RV to iMotorhome, ‘... and the co-driver and I love the freedom this lifestyle offers. For us, it is much more about the journey as the destination’ (Robertson 2015a). Anecdotally, evidence suggests that grey nomads look for value for money and quality and will spend their money on superior products and experiences:

They will eat out, visit tourist attractions and go on tours. While these travellers are saving money on accommodation, indications are they are spending just as much, on
average, as other travellers on regional tourist experiences and retail outlets (DEEDI 2010, p. 7).

Accordingly, in many respects, the grey nomad is discernible only by their mode of travel, their RV, and the duration of their trip which when combined (see Chapter 2 – Taxonomy of caravanning: Identifying determinants of RVers) assists to present an economic “personality” of the grey nomad’ (DEEDI 2010, p. 7). Preferences for overnight stays are often determined by vehicle type (see Chapter 2 – Taxonomy: Vehicle selection). Grey nomads with self-contained RVs have a greater propensity to camp out in freedom locations than those travelling in non-self-contained vehicles (Balfour 2012; Caldicott & Harris 2015a; Jones 2016b). The latter with a greater propensity to use caravan parks. The Qld government’s own submission (DEEDI 2010) to the inquiry advises:

We know that grey nomads can and have important (and varied) impacts on regional Queensland communities – they spend money and enrich the spirit of community – yet they also can, at times, place additional demands on local services (p.4). While the National Visitor Survey can be used to gauge the number of grey nomad visitors and the number of nights they are spending in regional Queensland, it does not provide an accurate estimate of the economic contribution of these travellers in Queensland’s regional areas (p. 7). The decisions that grey nomads make will likely be driven by comfort factors, such as the availability of infrastructure and facilities along the route and at the stopover (p. 7).

The contest of economic contribution to communities through grey nomad tourism is not new by any means. At a micro level, Greiner et al. (2004) contend from their study of the Carpentaria Shire in Queensland that grey nomads spend six times more per visit because they stay longer and Robson (2007) notes average length of stay to be about four times the typical Queensland tourist average. These combined factors make grey nomads appear very valuable tourist. Further, at a macro level, Pegg et al. (2013) report AU$ 12 billion spent by domestic mature aged travellers in Australia in 2004 representing 35% of total tourism GDP. Thus, in consideration of the reflected population growth, the existing volume of grey nomads travelling, and the expectation that there will be many more grey nomads on the roads in future, the impact on local economies is significant (Hillman 2010).

Reflecting on media commentary around the inquiry (see Sweetman 2012 and its admissions), Pegg et al. (2013) contend that since grey nomads look for ‘value for money and quality’ they are not exactly ‘travelling goldmines’ (p. 3) (Figure 15). The latter qualification reflecting Baillie’s (2008) questioning view of grey nomads as travelling bank accounts. As the then CEO of the NSW Caravan and Camping Industry Association, Baillie contended that grey nomads have less
disposable income than the cashed-up retiree which places them in a different class. The danger of this narrow economic classification is that it stereotypes grey nomads as homogenous, single dimensional economic units. Rather, as offered by Tourism Queensland, communities would do well to embrace grey nomads acknowledging their diversity and the multi-dimensional perspectives governed by their desire for variety (O’Neill et al. 2010) and ‘range of experiences’ (DEEDI 2010, p. 29).

Indeed, local impacts from grey nomad tourism can be significant, both negative and positive. However, as qualified through a personal submission to the Qld inquiry, Stoeckl (2010) relayed findings from her empirical investigation of tourism in the Carpentaria Shire. She was particularly concerned for the impacts of different types of visitors (see Stoeckl et al. 2006), and sought to highlight to the inquiry that perceptions regarding economic contribution can be deceptive:

If one only counts the total dollars spent by nomads, the ‘answer’ is (probably), ‘substantial’. BUT... if one considers BOTH the dollars spent AND the value of a region’s resources that are ‘used up’ by these tourists, then the answer is ‘not necessarily substantial’. Indeed, the answer may even be ‘negative’: at least for some residents. The owners of caravan parks, no doubt, benefit. But some people suffer (e.g. local residents who are not associated with the tourism industry who see their fish stocks depleted, their favourite swimming holes congested, or who must ration their own water use so there is plenty for the nomads) (Stoeckl 2010, p. 1).

In solution to her own cautionary qualification, Stoeckl encouraged the Committee to consider means to relieve communities of extraneous internal costs to service external markets. She does this in full recognition that many grey nomads stay in the Carpentaria Shire for the whole of the southern winter (about four months per year) but do not contribute to the infrastructure and servicing costs through payment of local rates:

If there is a ‘global’ decision to go ahead and encourage greater numbers of grey nomads to visit rural and regional parts of Qld, then I urge the Committee to try to find ways of ensuring that those who benefit most from this venture, are also those who contribute most to the provision of costly infrastructure to support the tourists (be that infrastructure ‘physical’ - such as road upkeep, dams, and water reticulation schemes; or ‘soft’ - such as the provision of staff to help monitor fish-takes, rubbish disposal, and off-road access to protected areas) (p. 1).

As the Carpentaria Shire, and primarily the Gulf-side town of Karumba, effectively substitute as a long-stay home away from home for the grey nomads, Stoeckl’s recommendation was for them to contribute financially to the regional servicing infrastructure. A range of other considerations were presented to the Committee by multiple interest groups. Given the extent of mixed reaction
to grey nomad tourism, with strong polarisation to freedom camping in particular, a snapshot of views is presented through Table 7.

While acknowledging competing arguments around the cash value of grey nomad tourism, inquiry committee chair Evan Morehead MP concluded, ‘grey nomad tourism is a valuable source of tourism expenditure for Queensland and, in particular, regional communities’ (p. 13). The Queensland Government’s acceptance of the inquiry recommendations was acknowledgement that with the more robust understanding of grey nomads they were better placed:

...to guide future government and industry planning, infrastructure and investment decisions to achieve a substantial benefit from any programs/initiatives that might be delivered by government to target this discrete segment of the ‘mature age’ tourist market (p. 10).

Figure 15 - Community attempts to encourage grey nomad spending
Photo credit: Author

Even so, the Qld government proceeded with caution noting the housing crisis in Australia was still dominant to tourism (see the constraining period – this Chapter). Through their own response to the inquiry report, the government conceded that:

...any strategies to increase the availability of accommodation in caravan parks for [mobile] grey nomads must acknowledge and seek to mitigate the risk of social dislocation and financial loss for manufactured-home owners and permanent caravan residents (DEEDI 2010, p. 3).
### Table 7 - Summary of contrasting submissions to inquiry on grey nomad tourism in Qld

Source: Author

#### Developing Queensland’s Rural and Regional Communities Through Grey Nomad Tourism

##### Summary of contrasting public submissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Issue of concern</th>
<th>Proposed solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arguments for freedom camping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Group</td>
<td>Home Hill Chamber of Commerce (2010)</td>
<td>Lack of data on freedom campers.</td>
<td>Proudly offered their “Comfort Stop” as a case study resource for collecting further data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of ‘net-benefit’ cooperation between stakeholders.</td>
<td>Work proactively with local council to ensure well managed Comfort Stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CASE</strong> – Comfort Stop is a purposely allocated backstreet of the CBD for 48 hr RV stays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Tourism Organisation</td>
<td>Mackay Tourism (2010)</td>
<td>Looks forward to greater recognition of the economic value of “grey nomads” and the introduction of policies which support growth of this important segment.</td>
<td>Simplification of government regulation - industry more viable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Expressed concerns over commercial caravan park closures, being aware of six local cases in recent years due to owners seeking a better return on investment.</td>
<td>Review use of public land for free or discounted camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Of those that remained, many had been utilised for months on end as waves of coal industry workers had rendered them unavailable for RV tourism.</td>
<td>Review of associated planning conditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>CASE</strong> - Mackay, for instance has a perfectly located showgrounds, vacant for much of the year, which could be easily adapted to handle overflow from the commercial parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Tourism Agency</td>
<td>Tourism Queensland (DEEDI 2010)</td>
<td>It cannot be assumed all grey nomads are looking for exactly the same type of holiday destinations and/or experiences. Grey nomad tourists are looking for a range of experiences which are not dictated by their age, but by what they want to get out of their holiday (both their physical and emotional needs)</td>
<td>Focusing on experiences for grey nomads, rather than their age, will better inform the assessment and development of infrastructure for this market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preferences for overnight stays is often determined by vehicle type.</td>
<td><strong>CASE</strong> - Tourism Queensland’s (TQ) domestic segmentation model does not treat grey nomads as a distinct age based target market. Rather it contends they exist within each of the identified experience based domestic target segments currently driving TQ activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Arguments against freedom camping** | | | |
| State Caravan and Camping Industry Association | NSW CCIA (2010b) | Illegal camping, particularly on showgrounds. | Legitimate caravan parks can adequately cater for all RV travellers and accommodate future growth. |
| | | Local councils are the offenders offering non-compliant land for illegal camping. | Maintain regulation status quo enforcing camping compliance with National Competition Policy. |
| | | Legitimate caravan parks’ current average occupancy rates are generally less than 50%. | **CASE** – Agreement reached between the NSW Government (three relevant agencies), Local Government & Shires Association (LGSAs), the industry (CCIA) and a consumer club - the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) on policy and regulation for illegal camping. |
| | | It seems that the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) has had an influence on the instigation of this inquiry. | |

---
The cautioning qualifier of “risk of social dislocation” presents a serious case of *deja-vu*. The dilemma of “balance” – that between provision of low-cost housing for permanent residents and low-cost site provision for mobile residents is demonstrably cyclic (see Caldicott 2012; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b). While the Queensland Government was acknowledging the importance to secure increased availability of sites in existing caravan parks for short-term tourist accommodation this was countered and deprioritised by needs against the displacement of permanent or long-term caravan park residents (DEEDI 2010; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004). Within the life-cycle of caravan parks (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b), and the dislocation of their occupants (Gilbert 2013; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004), the Queensland Government proceeded to implement the recommendations from the inquiry. First, through the development of their *Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-2015* (DTESB 2013b) and further, through two complimentary guidelines (see sections 2.5.7 and 2.5.8) to support local government in planning initiatives for freedom camping.

4.4.4 Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-2020

This Strategy acknowledges the government’s understanding of the imperatives to meet the needs of a broad range of markets, inclusive of grey nomad, vanpackers and freedom campers. To reach the economic targets (doubling visitor spend) outlined in their drive-tourism strategy, Queensland identified that it must continue to provide a range of accommodation options to meet the expectations of all drive consumers. They sought to do this by facilitating the development of new camping alternatives and expanding the type and style of camping options presently offered to visitors within local communities.

4.4.5 Camping Options Tool Kit

The Camping Options Toolkit, a 70 page “best-practice” guide (DTESB 2014d) launched in March 2014 was ‘designed to assist local governments to effectively manage camping alternatives in their communities and provide tourists with a more predictable approach to non-commercial camping’ (p. 10). It responded to the changing camping markets and their specific needs and expectations. The Toolkit encourages local governments, independently or in partnership with existing and established businesses, to develop new camping alternatives. This includes supporting local governments to review the suitability of their existing local laws and the planning scheme definitions in line with the range of contemporary and emerging camping markets. In an era of demonstrated demand, an arena of contested need, and an environment of high regulatory burden (DLGC 2015a; DTESB 2014d; Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009; GPSC 3 Committee 2014), the Toolkit was, at that time, the most significant policy position taken by any state government and a ‘major milestone for camping in Queensland’ (DTESB 2014d, p. 3).
4.4.6 Best-practice Guidelines for Rest Areas

The rest area guidelines subsequently released in July (DTESB 2014b) were informed by a series of public consultations with overseer by a Road-side Rest Area Consultative Forum (RRCF). The forum hosted ‘representatives from touring and caravanning groups, as well as local government and state government agencies involved in tourism, enforcement and operational matters relating to road-side rest areas’ (DTESB 2014b, p. 5). Queensland identifies Type ‘A’ rest areas as ‘those providing extensive facilities of a high standard to support all potential motorist types, including those that wish to use the facility for limited stay opportunities’. The guideline suggests that these sites generally do not conflict with commercial or civic sites within the area. This is a contested position (McGrath 2014) particularly when rest areas may, where designated, allow 12-48 hour camping and have a dump point provided’ (DTESB 2014b, pp. 16-17). The rest area guidelines have no legal or binding effect. However, they do provide local governments, state government agencies, community groups, and tourists with a more predictable approach to non-commercial camping in Qld.

4.4.7 New South Wales (2014)

Public hearings for the NSW inquiry into Tourism in Local Communities received a raft of written submissions and oral evidence across 2014. This inquiry, as recorded in the 2 May minutes of the Legislative Council (2013, p. 1660), gave indication that the NSW government was interested to understand the impacts of tourism on local government areas, particularly unregulated tourism. This inquiry also receives considerable attention herein as it too informs application in other states and cuts across the case study zone for this thesis.

The inquiry committee chair, the Hon Natasha Maclaren-Jones (NSW Liberal Party), emphasised through her final report (GPSC 3 Committee 2014, p. xi) that New South Wales tourism had recently undergone significant reform. The reforms came about after an extensive review of the tourism sector by the Visitor Economy Taskforce during 2011-12, which recommended large scale changes to delivery of government funding for regional tourism in NSW. The reforms were viewed as being necessary to enable the tourism sector to contribute to the goal of doubling overnight visitor expenditure, as set out in the NSW government’s 10 year strategic business plan, NSW 2021, A Plan to Make NSW Number One. The inquiry was not singularly responding to freedom camping, nor the subsequent impacts of the phenomenon on local communities. However, considerable comment was heard from stakeholders on unregulated tourism and freedom camping.
Table 8 presents a summary of arguments against, for, and facilitating of freedom camping as presented to the inquiry with the number of submissions noted by stakeholder category. The NSW inquiry content and submissions were not at all surprising considering the currency of the freedom camping phenomenon and the Committee membership inclusive of The Honourable Jan Baraham of the Greens Party. The Honourable Member was a past mayor of Byron Shire Council between 2004-2011 when that Council was lobbying the State for amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993* to assist them in the management (albeit regulation) of freedom “street” camping (see Chapter 5 – Case study one: Byron Shire). Byron LGA is reputedly inflicted by both freedom camping and residential holiday lets which were both considered unregulated tourism within Byron’s 2014 Local Environmental Plan (LEP).

Chapter five of the inquiry’s final report ‘examines unregulated camping, an activity that has emerged as a significant issue in recent years as a result of the growth of RV tourism market’ (GPSC 3 Committee 2014, p. xv). Inquiry submissions were received from a range of stakeholder groups including representatives from national caravan and tourism networks, state caravan and camping associations, state agencies such as the roads authority, caravan clubs and local government. The hearings and submissions were dominated by the polarised lobbies representing: first, the anti-freedom camping commercial caravan park operators and their industry associations; and second, the pro-freedom camping consumers and their advocating club representatives. The first group pursuing market-based principles of NCP while the latter group claiming the moral high ground and traditional-use rights.

The Committee was also presented with the suggestion that ‘councils should be encouraged to wheel clamp and fine drivers of non-self-contained vehicles who camp illegally’ (p. 94), that is, outside of designated camping areas. However, the Committee did not impress this aspect within a formal recommendation. Instead, they reconfirmed the status quo that ‘camping in a road-side rest area may be permitted, unless a “no camping” or “overnight stays” sign erected by a relevant authority is displayed (Trade and Investment 2014, p. 9).

To present further detail on the specifics of evidence presented to the inquiry by the bevy of individual stakeholder is beyond the scope of this section though full transcripts of the public hearings held in Sydney (12 and 26 August), and the round table discussions at Ballina (9 September) and Dubbo (10 September) are publicly available (GPSC 3 Committee 2013a, 2013b, 2013c; News ABC)
### Table 8 - Tourism in regional communities - summary of public submissions

**Source:** Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Arguments against freedom camping</th>
<th>Proposed solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>National caravan and tourism associations</td>
<td>Councils turning a blind eye to their regulatory burden they are required to impose on new entrants into the market (Coventry 2015, p. 12). Councils supporting unregulated tourism/camping due to threats of boycotts to towns (ARTN 2013, p. 8).</td>
<td>The current unregulated forms of tourism need regulation to the same standard as other camping and accommodation providers (ARTN 2013, p. 9). Important that government policy decisions continue to support/enforce level playing field rules (ARTN 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>State caravan park associations</td>
<td>Councils are offering non-compliant sites without health, safety and environmental provisions. It is not simply possible for a compliant business to compete when services are being provided free of charge or at a non-market rate (GPSC 3 Committee 2013b, p. 17).</td>
<td>The caravan industry does not wish for special protection but are seeking an equal playing field to ensure the long-term viability of this important piece of tourism infrastructure (GPSC 3 Committee 2013b, p. 17).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Arguments for freedom camping

3 National RV clubs

- Need for clearer regulations or policy directives to recognise the unique needs of RV travellers.
- A vacuum in policies and legislative frameworks.
- RV travellers do not appear to easily fit into established policies and frameworks for recreational vehicles (GPSC 3 Committee 2013b, p. 2).
- Sections of legislation affect, but do not clarify, camping or staying on public lands in NSW.
- RV travellers begrudge having to pay for services they do not require and will bypass towns to find a low or no cost alternative (CMCA 2013, p. 3).
- The evolution of the modern self-contained RV, and the shifting expectations of RV tourists, has outpaced the capabilities and willingness of the traditional camping industry to satisfy growing demand.

- Create a taskforce to investigate and develop a clear regulatory framework (GPSC 3 Committee 2013b, p. 11).
- Present clearer regulations or policy directives regarding camping or overnighting in self-contained RVs on public land (GPSC 3 Committee 2014, p. 95).
- Provide regulations and laws and minimise restrictions on business to allow communities that want to attract RV travellers to develop basic facilities to enable them to capture this market (GPSC 3 Committee 2013b, p. 1).
- Councils and caravan park operators to consider loss of trade on other local businesses from self-contained RV tourism bypassing towns not providing low-cost or freedom camping alternatives (CMCA 2013, p. 4).

#### Government positions on facilitation of freedom camping

1 State government agencies

- Crown land management is overly-complex, making it difficult for community management.
- Legislation dating as far back as 1890, it is time to introduce clearer, simpler and more contemporary legislation.

- Government to cut the amount of legislation covering Crown land by repealing eight pieces of outdated and overlapping legislation and introducing a new single act (Local Government NSW 2015a).

2 Local Governments

- Councils generally unsupportive of unvetted overnight camping in public streets and reserves.

- Councils instead preference approved low-amenity camping sites where a donation or other small fee may be applied.
In summary and from the array of stakeholder evidence the Committee acknowledged ‘there needs to be clearer regulations or policy directives regarding camping or overnighting in self-contained RVs on public land’ (GPSC 3 Committee 2014, p. 95). It was recommended that the government establish a clear regulatory framework in this regard. In respect to the issues associated with non-self-contained vehicles, the Committee heard much evidence that councils were generally unsupportive of free overnight camping in public streets and reserves. However, they were supportive of low-cost camping, preferring to direct campers to council approved low-amenity camping sites where a donation or other small fee may be applied.

NSW Planning, Roads and Maritime Services, and local government legislations each have a role in regulating road-side camping. The Committee did acknowledge a need to designate further areas of Crown land for the purpose of recreational vehicle camping and that guidelines for the sustainable use of appropriate and designated areas will assist management of those sites. All permissible practices should be consistent with management principles for Crown lands. In March 2014, Deputy NSW premier Andrew Stoner, announced the Crown lands management review (Local Government NSW 2015a). In launching this work Deputy Stoner made the following points:

- Crown land accounts for more than 40 per cent of the State, with community groups, local businesses and farmers depending on Crown reserves across NSW.
- Crown land delivers many social, environmental and economic benefits to the people of NSW and the Government is taking action to ensure these benefits continue.
- The management of Crown land has become overly-complex which makes it difficult for the community to manage their reserves and facilities.
- With legislation dating as far back as 1890, it is time to introduce clearer, simpler and more contemporary legislation.
- The Government’s response would include cutting the amount of legislation covering Crown land by repealing eight pieces of outdated and overlapping legislation and introducing a new single Act (Local Government NSW 2015a, 2016).

In weighing up the evidence, considering the arguments presented, listening to opportunities sought and hearing of the barriers imposed on issues arising around the freedom camping phenomenon, the GPSC Committee No.3 made the recommendation for ‘the NSW government to develop guidelines around camping on public land’ covering both self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles (GPSC 3 Committee 2014, p. 95). This recommendation was formally endorsed through the government’s response (Trade and Investment 2014, p. 9) tabled in the Legislative
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Council on 14 October 2014 (Legislative Council 2014, p. 35). In summary, Table 9 presents the thrust of issues presented to the individual parliamentary inquiries across Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland, along with their outcomes and respective recommendations that ensued. At the time of writing this thesis some of the actions and recommendations have been implement at the relevant state level, but many have not. This leaves the status quo in place in those instances and the confusion, debate and politics surrounding freedom camping continue to manifest, sometimes many years after an inquiry and its subsequent recommendations being adopted by the state government.

Table 9 - Summary of state inquiries through the acknowledging period (2006-2013/14)
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Year</th>
<th>Parliamentary Inquiry</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QLD 2011</td>
<td>Developing Queensland’s rural and regional communities through grey nomad tourism (Morehead 2011)</td>
<td>Exponential growth of older Australians brings additional tourism impacts. Emergence of RV Friendly Towns. Grey nomad economic “personality” is non-stereotypical. A data vacuum exists.</td>
<td>Qld government commits (DEEDI 2011) to: funding a comprehensive economic evaluation of grey nomads; evaluating the impact of existing and new policies that impact on grey nomad tourism; providing advice to local governments on methods to undertake cost-benefit analysis studies to determine net community impacts; endorsing trust land management plans (TLMP) supporting short-term camping; assisting councils with applications of cost recovery in respect to trust lands used for short-term camping; and, developing a ‘Camping Options Toolkit’ (DTESB 2014d).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.8 Other events of national significance

Amid the range of state inquiries the acknowledging period was punctuated by two further state-level constraining initiatives reminiscent to the earlier Ombudsmen report in Queensland; the first was in New South Wales and the second in Tasmania. The NSW case manifested through a letter to the NSW CCIA dated 12 August 2009, from the then Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally. It stated:

As you know, the establishment of a caravan park or camping ground requires development consent under SEPP 21. The operation of a caravan park or camping ground also requires approval under the Local Government Act 1993, even if the park or ground is of a temporary facility (e.g. for a special event). The Department of Planning will provide advice to councils reminding them of the approval requirements for those facilities and of the problems associated with illegal camping (CCIA 2010a).

A subsequent position paper was released by the NSW Land and Property Management Authority (Crown Land Division) dated April 2010 titled – The use of Crown reserves for operating caravan parks and camping grounds (LPMA 2010). This position paper (see Appendix 3) was sent to every local government authority in NSW, whether they engaged with, and/or condoned freedom camping or not with a further reminder issued from the Department of Planning in 2013 (see Chapter 5 – Walget Shire: Policy-level perspective).

The Tasmanian case followed in 2012. Pursuant of complaint from four caravan park owners, the State Economic Regulator condemned councils’ provision of low-cost or free RV camping services as tantamount to unnecessary competition for the private caravan park industry (LGAT 2012a). The Tasmanian government, similar to the NSW example above, subsequently released their State-wide Directions Paper and Policy Guidelines for Recreational Vehicles encouraging councils to be more transparent in their approach to full-cost attribution for the supply of such services. In recognition of the fast paced changing environments across Australia surrounding RVing in general, and freedom camping in particular, the Australian Responsible Recreational Vehicle Campers Forum (ARRVCF) was established in 2010 (Fincham 2011; Morrison 2012). Although this forum was an initiative from CMCA, it was an entrepreneurial (problem brokering) attempt in providing a platform for collaboration on issues common to suppliers, consumers, marketers, and regulators of RV product. It was intended as neutral territory between the contested parties with membership broadly categorised as commercial (supply), consumer (demand), government (public policy) and media (advocate and distribution) (Figure 17). The forum sought to bring the highly engaged triad of stakeholders (LG, CIAA and themselves, CMCA) together within a setting supplemented with expertise, advice and guidance provided by stakeholders more moderately
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engaged These were drawn from state-level agencies like the local government associations or roads and transport departments along with travel and tourism media. Agencies from federal-level government departments or their proxies (i.e. Economic Development Australia, Tourism Australia or interested federal members of the legislative assembly) plus national industry and government associations (i.e. Local Government Australia or ARTN) form the outer level with only low levels of engagement.

Figure 16(a) Mullumbimby, Byron Shire
Photo credit: Author

Figure 16(b) Lagoon Grass, Lismore City Council
Photo credit: Author

Figure 16(c) Boonah, Scenic Rim Council
Photo credit: Author

Figure 16(d) Collarenabri, Walgett Shire
Photo credit: Author

Figure 16 - Representation of Council condoned public camping places for RVs
Source: Author

Those agencies represented towards the centre of Figure 17 had the strongest engagement. Member participation in ARRVCF was not statutory and participants were fluid in their commitment to engagement (philosophical and physical) with interest levels driven by the fluctuation in public mood, the media and organisational/departmental priorities at the time. After just five meetings across the period from 2010 to 2013 the forum ceased to meet for political reasons, among others: a quiet disquiet between respective groups; a lack of funding; and, a lack of independence of the voluntary CMCA secretariat.
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### Figure 17 - Stakeholder networks, interest groups and institutions by level of engagement

Source: Author
4.5 The facilitating/trialling period (2013/14-2017)

Table 10 highlights events that affected the freedom camping discourse through the facilitating/trialling period. Local governments across Australia started to engage more robustly in the freedom camping debate after the state inquiries of the acknowledging period (2006-2013/14). As their successive engagements are not mutually exclusive of state initiatives this section first reports some nationally dispersed local initiatives before concluding with an update on the new and innovative state initiatives in Western Australia.

Developments within the caravan park industry were exposed through the 2012 Productivity Commission inquiry into performance benchmarking of Australian business regulation. Specifically the inquiry investigated role of local government as a regulator to the caravan park industry. As submitted by the Victorian Caravan Parks Association (VCPA) caravan and camping has transitioned across the past decade:

Traditionally, camping and caravanning activities have always represented affordable family holiday accommodation. In recent decades, the growth of an emerging market of more discernible customers has revolutionised the industry. In particular, the baby-boomers now enjoying retirement, and double-income families with time constraints, now demand a higher level of facilities when they holiday. This has led to an exponential growth in luxury self-contained cabin style accommodation with all mod-cons available, and in luxury recreational vehicles that carry all the features of a mobile home (Victorian Caravan Parks Association 2012, p. 2)

While conceding the shift towards a more discernible market, those looking for luxury amenity, the submission also acknowledged a revolutionising of caravanning which has had several unintended consequences for the caravan industry. First, the exponential growth in luxury self-contained cabin style accommodation is driving new and expanding business to commercial parks in the form of the non-towing customer. The demand from this distinct market is encouraging park operators to install increasing amounts of cabins at the expense of sites traditionally allocated to the towing customer. This transition of RV site to cabin sites is evident across the board though more pronounced in hotspot tourist areas and in resource rich areas where Fly-in Fly-out (FIFO) mine workers are demanding of accommodation. However, in both scenarios the transition is occurring at the expense of capacity and affordable sites for RV travellers. Second, exponential growth in recreational vehicles, particularly those that more resemble a mobile home than a temporary holiday shelter on wheels, is driving a new breed of RV camper. This self-contained camper is increasingly looking to stay outside of commercial caravan parks, instead choosing to freedom camp in public places.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code*</th>
<th>Year (Month)</th>
<th>Level (State)</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2013 (April)</td>
<td>Local (Qld)</td>
<td>Recreational Vehicle Project.</td>
<td>Cook Shire Council introduced a trial of low-cost ($5.00/night) freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2014 (Feb)</td>
<td>Local (Vic)</td>
<td>Recreational Vehicle Strategy.</td>
<td>South Gippsland Shire authorised specific venues for freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2014 (Aug)</td>
<td>Region (NSW)</td>
<td>Freedom Traveller Taskforce.</td>
<td>NCDN seeks to manage freedom camping across 21 LGAs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2014 (Aug)</td>
<td>Local (Qld)</td>
<td>Camping Options Strategy.</td>
<td>Fraser Coast Regional Council facilitated action to accommodate freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2015 (Feb)</td>
<td>Local (Qld)</td>
<td>CMCA members only no-frills RV park.</td>
<td>Hinchinbrook Shire Council hosts Australia’s first CMCA RV park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2015 (June)</td>
<td>Local (Qld)</td>
<td>Cooroy CBD RV Stop.</td>
<td>Noosa Shire Council supported RV Friendly Town status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015 (July)</td>
<td>Local (NT)</td>
<td>Showground camping under commercial park scrutiny.</td>
<td>Blatherskite Park in Alice Springs comes under fire from commercial caravan parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2015 (July)</td>
<td>Local (Nat)</td>
<td>See Table 16 - National snapshot - making Australia RV Friendly initiatives Prohibition on freedom camping.</td>
<td>Local governments across Australia embrace initiatives for freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2015 (Aug)</td>
<td>Local (Vic)</td>
<td>Prohibition on freedom camping.</td>
<td>Horsham Rural City shutsdown freedom camping at the showground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2015 (Dec)</td>
<td>State (WA)</td>
<td>Nature-based Park Licensing Guidelines for Developers and Governments.</td>
<td>Designed with a focus on the intended market segment and type of facilities required balanced with environmental sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2016 (Feb)</td>
<td>Local (Vic)</td>
<td>CMCA members only no-frills RV park.</td>
<td>City of Ballarat commenced negotiations with CMCA for a members only RV park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2016 (April)</td>
<td>Local (Vic)</td>
<td>Freedom camping trial under commercial park scrutiny.</td>
<td>Ballarat City prematurely closes freedom camping trial at Pioneer Park.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/T</td>
<td>2017 (Jan)</td>
<td>Local (Tas)</td>
<td>Freedom of choice camping expands in Tasmania.</td>
<td>CMCA announce their second RV park will be at Railton and has Kentish Council support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Light Green = Enabling (E); Red = Constraining (C); Yellow = Acknowledging (A); Dark Green = Facilitating/Trialling (F)
This maximises the investment and the mobile amenity of their vehicle. The increased amenity now inside their RV, represented by the increased infrastructure (i.e. showers, toilets, holding tanks and electricity supply), was once the domain of the fixed “hooked-up” assets associated with caravan parks. With the necessary on-board living infrastructure, freedom campers are impressing upon commercial operators their desire rather than need to avoid commercial sites (Caldicott et al. 2014b). Leading the revolt are the grey nomads, some in travelling penthouses followed by gen Ys in the less salubrious hippie-mobiles. Each are trending away from parks that are geared towards the discernible double-income families.

While the 2012 VCPA submission on the one hand acknowledges this market shift, the Association membership on the other hand, ideologically remains resolute in opposition to any transition of traditional market share away from their traditional market based model of business operation. In a protectionist move, VCPA’s recommendation was that ‘no free-camping sites be set up and approved [by local government] within a 50 km distance from a commercial caravan park’ (p. 5). In contrast to this 2012 Victorian “plea” for an exclusion zone, in 2015 the WA government removed the exclusion provision from their caravan park legislation. WA ruled that any such exclusion was in breach of the section 46 of the NCP, a direct dismissal to reoccurring claims presented through the commercial park association lobbies. Subsequently, across the facilitating/trialling period freedom camping places continued to develop close to town boundaries, by example those at Bass Valley and the Franklin River Reserve in Victoria (South Gippsland Shire Council 2014). Additionally, some RV rest areas such as those in the Queensland towns of Home Hill, Cooktown, Childers and Cooroy are within walking distance to central business districts. Towns like Esperance (WA) and Sunshine Coast (Qld) are still wrestling with the exclusion zone concept as they progress strategies, trials and interim policies to manage the parking and camping issues for RVs.

As recently as 2015 and in closed-ranks support of their Victorian colleagues, CIAA CEO, Stuart Lamont, told Inside Tourism that the absence of an exclusion zone results in the clumping of RVs on the outskirts of towns. He says, ‘These people are far more visible and as a result the perception is that they are growing and becoming a nuisance. So they are in our face and we need to deal with it’ (Coventry 2015, p. 13). This “nuisance” factor in 2015 appears a common cry still reminiscent of those echoing across Europe (Lucassen 1991) and Australia (Porter 1949) last Century:
Caravanners are rightly here to stay and are, or can be made by proper measures, an asset to the community, instead of the possible menace that a certain few municipalities, in the first flourish of a new ‘problem’ seem to have regarded them (Porter 1949, p. 15).

4.5.1 State and local tensions

For many years (see the enabling period) the activity of freedom camping on public lands was either supported, ignored in the face of competing priorities, or simply turned a blind eye too by governments. Such behaviour is suggestive of agenda setting (Lukes 1974) so as to avoid the messy politics that decision-making may trigger. Some councils are still cloistering freedom camping in that past “closed-eyes” perspective. However, others are pro-actively engaged in freedom camping, reflecting purposeful ‘political organisation of bias’ (Schattschneider 1960, p. 71); that is, they are actively organising freedom camping into their local politics and making direct decisions to provide showgrounds or other public spaces for camping. However, they are not always as equally engaged with their statutory obligation to that space. As trust managers on behalf of the Crown they have, in certain cases, actively organised away from their political need to address adequate management planning to meet state legislative imperatives. This was the situation in the Barcaldine/Blackall cases investigated in Queensland (Queensland Ombudsman 2006, 2007) headlined - Public caravan parks: unfair competition or community benefit. Responding to the Ombudsman’s decision Blackall Shire Council ceased camping activity at the showground. On the contrary, Barcaldine Shire rejected the decision premised on the Ombudsman’s acknowledgement that ‘no unlawful activity’ had transpired. However, as the showground was Crown land, the Department of Lands intervened, encouraging Council to develop a management plan that reflected camping as a secondary use of trust land under Caravan Park Policy PUX/901/209. (DNRM 2013).

The following section presents a national snapshot of RV directed initiatives at the local government level. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss every single event though selectively events are drawn upon to present an umbrella perspective of council engagements in the freedom camping political arena.

4.5.2 National snapshot of RV Friendly initiatives

Table 11 below lists a range of councils that seek to optimise the freedom camping market against others that prefer to prosecute the same market. The list is by no means exhaustive but does reflect the national spread of activity, both by state and time across the facilitating/trialling period.
## Table 11 - National snapshot - RV policy initiatives in facilitating/trialling period (2013/14-2017)

Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013/14 - 2016 Pro-freedom camping initiatives</th>
<th>Snapshot of activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td><strong>Year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Anti-freedom camping initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Tweed Shire</td>
<td>Increased ranger patrols to deter freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td></td>
<td>Council closes freedom camping site at Burringbar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bruce Chick Park closed to camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLd</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Cairns Regional</td>
<td>Crackdown on illegal campers on local streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Brisbane City</td>
<td>Signage warns West End campers of bylaws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Gold Coast City</td>
<td>Crackdown on illegal campers on the Southport Spit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Douglas Shire</td>
<td>Rangers recruited to conduct a camper crackdown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Margaret River</td>
<td>Produce flyer to emphasise “no free-camping”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Geelong &amp; Bellarine</td>
<td>RTO dismisses freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>June</td>
<td>City of Ballarat</td>
<td>Freedom camping trial targeted by commercial parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Horsham Rural City</td>
<td>Showground not compliant - <em>Residential Tenancies Act</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>Naracoorte Lucindale</td>
<td>Commercial operators oppose showground camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Sept</td>
<td>Darwin City</td>
<td>Crackdown on illegal campers on local streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>Alice Springs Regional</td>
<td>Showgrounds camping under commercial scrutiny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Apr</td>
<td></td>
<td>Camping denied to independent campers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Central Coast</td>
<td>Commercial caravan park opposes welfare camping.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
but notably it reflects the reoccurring polarising perspectives. In fact, some councils and the state caravan and camping industries are still endorsing the position of the constraining period – that of enforced compliance to their interpretation of existing legislations. By example, in 2015 Caravanning Queensland once again reminded councils that they had a duty to ‘support existing businesses before considering new facilities’ (Caravanning Queensland 2015, p. 2). Such facilities are taken to also include default venues that spring up as councils turn a blind eye to freedom camping, or take a strategic “no-decision” approach to it, or simply have other priorities.

Caravanning Queensland (2015) continued to reinforce their stance through rebuttal to an innovative CMCA accommodation supply project. CMCA seeks to develop a chain of low-cost, “member only”, RV parks aligned with camping guidelines endorsed through Queensland’s Camping Options Toolkit (DTESB 2014d). CMCA, through their Member Parks Prospectus, interpreted the Queensland Government’s policy shift (see Camping Options Toolkit) as supporting local councils to review their local laws in view to facilitating a more accommodating range of alternate camping experiences. Caravanning Queensland (2015) staunchly opposed CMCA’s interpretation. Rather, they claimed the changes in policy:

...are to support the commercial caravan parks and to provide them with an opportunity to diversify their product offering. Not to encourage councils to negotiate licensing terms and support CMCA to grow their membership numbers by allowing access to [public] land for sole use by CMCA members (Caravanning Queensland 2015, p. 2).

Caravanning Queensland (CQ) believed the commercial sector provided a sufficient ‘range of accommodation options to meet the needs and expectations of consumers’ (p. 2) and that local governments could ensure this provision continued only through enforcement; that is directing freedom campers into commercial sites via stringent local law enforcement:

Regulation is legitimately imposed to protect the community, the environment, consumers as well as industry and businesses. Compliance with applicable laws, guidelines, regulations and directions from regulatory bodies, ensures a minimum standard of quality and safety in goods and services that consumers can expect and rely upon (p. 2).

Such an enforcement position was similarly endorsed by the national association representing RV accommodation and suppliers. CIAA CEO, Stuart Lamont, while attending the HAPNZ 60th annual conference and trade show in Masterton NZ, on 3 July 2015, told Inside Tourism:

We have councils turning a blind eye to their regulatory burden they are required to impose on new entrants into the market. We have massive issues as far as that is concerned (Coventry 2015, p. 12).
By this time, evidence was building at the national level for an intervention that could force some compromise and collaboration between the supply and demand streams of the RV industry. Some participants looked to national associations for support while others were still seeking responses through their local councils and communities. The following section highlights the local government dilemma.

### 4.5.3 Local governments’ challenge

Rewards, interventions and laws that do not support freedom camping are still evident in many local councils around Australia across the facilitating/trialling period (2013-2017). Independent efforts by LGAs to manage the freedom camping phenomenon are varied and tend to be unique to each location. Some councils such as Byron and Tweed Shires in northern NSW, along with Waverley (Bondi) Council in Sydney, historically chose a distinctive “zero-tolerance” approach. As exhibited at Table 12, between April 2013 and December 2015 Byron Shire compliance officers reported the number of penalty notices (Penalty amount $110) issued for the offence of camping (Fail to comply with terms of a notice) or a camping related offence (No parking between 1am and 5am). A total of 2154 infringement notices were issued to alleged camping offenders with a further 400 official warning given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of infringements</td>
<td>1204</td>
<td>550 + 200 formal warnings</td>
<td>400+ 200 formal warnings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12 - Number of camping infringements in Byron Shire 2013-2015

Source: Adapted from Byron Shire Council 2014; 2015

As recorded by the Byron Shire Council in 2014, ‘this crackdown is not for the purpose of deterring camping visitors’ (Byron Shire Council 2014b, p. 36). Rather, Council’s enforcements were explained as ‘simply an attempt to curb a trend that causes detrimental effects to the overall aesthetics of the Shire which should be freely enjoyed by both residents and visitors’ (p. 36). The activity of freedom camping remains contentious with a number of residents of Byron Bay being very active in calling for ‘more action by council to prevent it from occurring’ (p. 36). The Byron Shire Local Environment Plan was amended in April 2016 with new planning controls put into effect to permit holiday lets but without any relief for freedom camping. Speaking with reference to the holiday lets, mayor Cl Richardson says ‘the outcome was about finding a balance between ensuring neighbourhood amenity and supporting tourism within a planning control that was not overly arduous’ (Echonetdaily 2016). He also indicated other processes were in place to investigate freedom camping (see Chapter 3 – Regional initiative to local challenge).
Approaches taken toward freedom camping by some other Australian local government authorities are just as divisive. Cairns regional council trialled a two week blitz on free-camping issuing 64 fines over the October-November 2013 period:

Only eight of these 64 fines were paid and 30 were withdrawn due to not having an address attached to them. Cairns found it very difficult to ensure that infringements are collected as many receiving notices are international travellers (Parsons 2013).

The City of Darwin also considered the recovery rates for penalty amounts issued for camping offences to 50 international vanpackers. They found that with only 30% of fines recovered the punitive system is not having a sufficient effect and illegal camping is an ongoing annoyance. Additionally, there is no third-party option to recover fines from the commercial vehicle hire companies (e.g. Britz, Jucy, Apollo, Wicked, and Hippy Camper) which provide some of the camping vehicles that the vanpackers use on their Australian sojourn.

However, not all of the Cairns community members supported the hard-line penalty-based initiatives of councils. Some Cairns business leaders called on their Regional Council to scrap the on-the-spot fines for illegal camping suggesting that more facilities be provided to accommodate the self-drive visitors. As reported by the Cairns Post, Fred Ariel, owner of Fitzroy Island Ferries and tour company Raging Thunder, labelled Cairns Regional Council’s policy on illegal camping “ridiculous” (Vlasic 2014):

You can drive around Europe and all around Australia, pop onto the side of the road and camp for a while - why aren’t we doing it here? Just because they don’t spend much money on the actual transport and accommodation, they spend up big on tours and sightseeing... they’re very important to us.

Woolshed attraction owner and CBD Revitalisation Taskforce member Dominic Davies said the self-drive market was the fastest growing area of youth adventure tourism. We need to recognise that that’s a trend in the market and we need to embrace it:

We’ve got the facilities to do it right here in the city with no expenditure to the ratepayer and a potential source of income for ratepayers. The fines are a deterrent and leave a sour taste in their [freedom campers] mouth (Vlasic 2014).

Davies proposed “The Pier” car park be opened to self-drive visitors for a small fee, an idea Mr Ariel supported. That would ‘cater for the grey nomads who I know talk about the lack of welcoming facilities in Cairns, down to the el cheapo bongo van with a European backpacker in it’ (Vlasic 2014). In contrast, John Tilton, CEO of Australian Tourist Park Management, which runs Cairns Holiday Park, opposed free-camping facilities, arguing:
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

It would create unfair competition for commercial holiday parks and camp grounds. Commercial parks have many costs to bear in order to be allowed to operate, such as workplace health and safety requirements, rates, licences, and security (Vlasic 2014).

Tilton also raised concerns about visitor safety, rubbish and the cost of water and sewer usage. The commercial operator concerns are similar in the Northern Territory (Top End) capital, Darwin. Top End Tourism general manager Tony Clementson, told Darwin City Council that his commercial operator based membership, including caravan parks and youth hostels believes:

To give these travellers a campsite in the city would be detrimental to backpacker hostels and budget accommodation. A telephone ring around to caravan park operators, indicated they had availability of powered and unpowered sites and that it would be very rare to turn anybody away. The smaller parks advised that on the rare occasion that they are at capacity, they bump into the larger Darwin parks (Darwin City Council 2010).

Despite the news from Top End Tourism, Darwin City Council was left with the unresolved daily occurrence of illegal camping in public places within the City. Vanpackers continued to evade council inspectors by parking in back-streets or simply refusing to pay fines. Self-drive travellers argue for more facilities in or near the CBD echoing the calls of some local business leaders (Vlasic 2014). Similar debates raged in Victoria. Moreland Council’s struggle to move on backpackers illegally camping at Coburg Lake was reported in the North West Leader (Hastings 2016). In response David Gapper (25 April) comments:

You will NEVER stop the backpackers. Their grapevine system is unbelievable and they either know the law or have someone who knows the law handy. I recently asked backpackers why they put their chairs etc. on the road/carpark instead of the grassed areas. Their response was ‘council have no authority on the [state-owned] roads/carparks etc.’ and it’s true.

This loophole in law enforcement between land tenures held at differing level of government was observed first-hand when I accompanied the Byron Shire rangers on patrol during the early morning of 2 January 2015. The rangers were very careful in their jurisdictional function. They would discriminate, by land tenure of parking place, when issuing tickets to vanpackers alleged to be camping in areas where the practice was signposted as a non-permissible activity. The loophole is further evidenced by Gold Coast City councillor Lex Bell:

I am informed that we cannot patrol for illegal parking because the land is not under Gold Coast City Council jurisdiction’, said the Surfers Paradise councillor (Houghton 2015c).

Through word-of-mouth, strict punitive measures implemented by individual councils tends to spread quickly across social media outlets and an underground network of “new” camping sites.
instantly materialise. The freedom camping phenomenon is not quelled, it is merely displaced. Quiet residential streets, open Crown lands, and road-side verges previously not impacted by the activity soon become de-facto campgrounds as the word spreads that more popular places are now patrolled (Clement 2015b; Patterson 2014; Walker 2014). In some instances, the cat and mouse cycle continues with councils installing additional signage. This reminds freedom campers that their behaviour may not, or no longer, comply with the areas’ intended purposes. Enforcement however, is made difficult with a range of free mobile phone apps (Gorman 2015; Patterson 2007) that makes connecting with like-minded campers as easy as connecting with Facebook. When campers learn of the “bad vibe” in a certain location their freedom camping behaviour does not cease, it is simply relocated (Clement 2015b; Gordon & Gleeson 2014; Patterson 2014).

Mayor Tate, of the Gold Coast City Council, acknowledged this migration happening right along the coast and subsequently into his Council area saying, ‘I think these campers keep coming north [from NSW] and simply don’t realise they have crossed the border into Queensland’ (Houghton 2015c). A recent media frenzy on the Gold Coast erupted after community complaint of campers occupying the Broadwater Spit area near Surfers Paradise. The Crown owned public parkland is under the jurisdiction of the Qld government owned Gold Coast Waterways Authority, ‘which has no legal power to fine offenders’ (Houghton 2015a). Instead, the Authority insisted that the power of enforcement and infringement rests with Gold Coast City Council as the local government authority. Acting Gold Coast police chief, Superintendent Lacy, agreed that it was ultimately Council’s responsibility to patrol parks for illegal campers. ‘We [the police] partnered with Council last year but it is up to them when we patrol. We wait for complaints to be lodged before we act’ (Houghton 2015b).

The see-sawing, blame shifting, responsibility shirking responses by different land tenure managers, local and state agencies, and local and state governments over freedom camping is no more telling than in this exchange reported in the Gold Coast Bulletin on 31 March 2015:

Council officers yesterday told the Bulletin that Crown land would not be patrolled in the future and blamed the Waterways Authority.

Mayor Tom Tate said council had cracked down on illegal camping across the city but refused to allocate resources to patrol Crown land.

‘Our officers have been proactive in moving on people they suspect of illegal camping’ he said.
'They have also conducted after-hours patrols each weeknight, including illegal camping, and a joint illegal camping patrol with the Queensland Police Service over the weekend'.

Deputy Opposition Leader and Southport MP John-Paul Langbroek said Council was obligated to patrol the area which had become ‘dangerous’ and ‘disgusting’.

‘If council says they do not have the regulatory power to police the area, I would dispute the claim’, he said (Houghton 2015a).

In an effort to manage the supply and demand gap for conveniently located and affordable freedom camping places in Australia the next section outlines a regional initiative that sought to arrest the conflict along the northern coast of New South Wales.

4.5.4 Regional initiative in response to local challenges

Embracing the Queensland “state” Toolkit model at a New South Wales “regional” level, the North coast destination network (NCDN) facilitated a Freedom Traveller Taskforce taking carriage of the State’s General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 recommendation for consistent freedom camping guidelines (see the acknowledging period: New South Wales – this Chapter). Encouraged by Byron’s shifting stance toward accommodating freedom campers, the NCDN sought to generate common solutions to camping across 21 LGAs, most particularly the nine councils along The Legendary Pacific Coast Drive (TLPC) – from Gosford to Tweed Heads. The stark turn of attitude from the “zero-tolerance” mentality recognised that the NIMBY (not in my back yard) syndrome of “fine ‘em and move ‘em on” is not a realistic nor sustainable local solution to a national phenomenon, particularly in renowned national and international tourism hotspot like Byron Bay. NCDN’s executive officer admitted freedom camping was a complex problem but she told News ABC, ‘a policy solution can be found to satisfy both travellers and businesses’ (Lowrey 2014):

We want to make sure that we have the right facilities and that we’re able to promote our holiday parks, and what they have to offer, as well as making sure that we’re providing free-camping that is of interest to the RV market.

Such an initiative, supported in principle by the NSW Office of Premier and the Cabinet (OPC) was not without challenges (Table 13). These were duly noted by the Premier’s office to include: current legislation and diversity of views regarding regulation of freedom camping; threats to and challenges from caravan and camping industry; difficulty in reaching agreement with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) over road-side infrastructure and signage; and, parochialism.
Participating in the NCDN Freedom Camping Taskforce survey\(^5\) of freedom camping (NCDN 2015) many coastal councils (n=9 of 13) advised that they did not have a current policy on low-cost or alternate camping.

Table 13 - Excerpt from Premiers and Cabinet (Draft) Regional Priorities Action Plan 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Delivery lead</th>
<th>Delivery partners</th>
<th>What will success look like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy 3</td>
<td>Action 1: Expand and connect the network of communities that welcome and support “freedom” camping.</td>
<td>North Coast Destination Network.</td>
<td>Local Government; Industry; Trade &amp; Investment; RMS; Planning NSW; and Community.</td>
<td>Overnight visitation and spend is increased contributing to the Visitor Economy target of doubling between 2010 and 2020. Increased contributions to Gross Regional Product (GRP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action 2: Drive legislative and regulatory reform that supports innovative solutions to reduce barriers and encourage greater overnight visitation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Legendary Pacific Coast is viewed as a destination and not a “transit lounge” between Sydney and the Gold Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action 3: Implement a regional signage strategy that supports The Legendary Pacific Coast as one of Australia’s iconic destinations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, each council did confirm that they currently accommodate alternate camping across a range of locations and through a range legislative instruments. Additionally, as summarised at Table 14, from the most southerly member council to the most northerly, each used a range of initiatives to independently address the phenomenon. By bringing the councils and their ideas together through the Task Force, it appeared that the window of opportunity to bring a “problem-solution” package (Kingdon 2011) for freedom camping to the NSW State government agenda was imminent. Despite the high ideals of the NCDN to provide a circuit breaker on the freedom camping through their destination “development” project, funding for the Task Force was not forth coming from their state parent agency, Destination NSW. This was a significant setback for the participating local governments in NSW within this facilitating/trialling period. The window of

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\(^5\) I declare that through my active industry engagement I was co-opted onto this Taskforce by the North Coast Destination Network and was instrumental in the implementation of this survey on their behalf.
opportunity presenting to foster local initiatives through regional actions in support of State
Legislative Council’s recommendations was abruptly closed.

Nevertheless, despite the project’s preliminary endorsement by the NSW Office of the Premier
and Cabinet, and being totally in step with recommendations emanating from inquiries in several
other states (see Table 7 – earlier this Chapter), the failure to fund was a significant indication of
governmental block (alternate agenda setting). The multi-tiered government and industry
approach for a short time was gathering momentum. There appeared, for the first time in
Australia, to be radical forward movement in cooperative solutions development across multiple
council, multiple levels of decision making, and systematic policy development for NSW.

Table 14 - NCDN Freedom Camping Taskforce survey of local governments along TLPC
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Current strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Macquarie</td>
<td>Alternate camping grounds are not permitted as Council deliberately focuses on sending RVs to the four Council controlled commercial holiday parks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>Did not respond to the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Stephens</td>
<td>Did not respond to the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes</td>
<td>Chose not to develop a policy preferring to deal with matters case by case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Taree</td>
<td>Looking at alternate camping options and a future implementation strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Macquarie</td>
<td>Conducting a camping management investigation inclusive of market research, signage, and other components to inform a Camping Management Strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hastings</td>
<td>Advised that freedom camping is a regional issue that should be approached collectively and consistently by all LGAs on The Legendary Pacific Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffs Harbour</td>
<td>Utilises the management plans for their reserves and park lands which are regulated for use under a variety of instruments including LG Act, Crown Lands Act, EP Act, Roads Act, NP Act, and Department of Planning Circulars. Council advises that it wants to approve a location for freedom camping however the location must meet the requirements of the appropriate legislation, polices and planning circulars irrespective of whether a fee is charged. There has been three resolutions by Council pertaining to this final matter in the last three years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Valley</td>
<td>Is RV Friendly and has priorities developed in relation to independent camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Valley</td>
<td>Did not respond to the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>Did not respond to the survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Shire</td>
<td>Formed a Freedom Camping Taskforce and is investigating sites and management strategies for alternate camping in partnership with local businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweed Shire</td>
<td>Resolved to enhance their “No Camping” position at known hotspots while preserving the practice of free or low-cost camping at less intrusive and traditional camping places such as the Murwillumbah showgrounds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, without funding for the NCDN project the action (or non-action) of the NSW government agency demonstrates that freedom camping was still not seen as a high political priority for the state government, despite the recommendations of their own General Purpose Standing Committee. Subsequently, the NCDN Board re-instructed their executive officer to disband the Taskforce and reprioritise projects in line with the “marketing” focus of Destination NSW. Granting this regional level setback individual LGAs in NSW and across Australia generally continued to develop independent and innovative management strategies for their own freedom camping challenges. LGAs and private developers of freedom camping places (i.e. see Charleville Bush Camp and Cooktown RV Rest Area) were not assisted in environments of systemic uncertainty and delays caused by overly prescribed and inflexible state-based regulation. Nevertheless, enterprising communities continued to progress freedom camping across the 2014/15 calendar year. Notable among the initiatives, though not for their flamboyance but rather their push against the status quo, are the Shires of Kulin (WA) and Kingston (SA).

Kulin Camp caravan park, a business enterprise of Kulin Shire Council was bold enough to step outside the traditional pricing model for caravan and camping parks. Instead, embracing IBISWorld thinking (Lin 2013), Kulin caravan park adopted a clear market position which matches product offerings to market expectations. Their pricing policies do not compete on tariff alone. Kulin introduce Orwellian pricing (see Biggs 2014; Breinlinger 2014) suggestive that ‘the day of fixed tariff fades back into the last Century’ (Yeoman 2015, p. 9):

> From a pricing perspective, we now inhabit an age in which ever more sophisticated data science holds the promise of perfect price discrimination, that is, individual transactions in which the customer decides to make a purchase and make it at the highest price she is willing to pay’ (p. 9).

Kulin expects that prudent pricing management will assist their commercial caravan park to achieve greater revenue optimisation by attracting price sensitive freedom campers. Through their marketing materials they announce to guests – YOU SET THE PRICE (Kulin Shire Council 2015; emphasis in original).

Kingston Council in South Australia also raises some further interesting developments in freedom camping. While the majority of proactive councils still limit their freedom camping provision to self-contained RVs, the Coastal Leader (2015) reported that Kingston was going against that trend. They relaxed their camping rules by allowing any dedicated camping vehicle to use their facilities. This made additional provision for non-self-contained vehicles such as roof-top campers on 4x4s, smaller caravans, and campervans such as those commonly used by vanpackers. While Kingston
had held RV Friendly status since September, 2010, allowing camping at a number of sites, they resolved through a workshop on 22 May 2015 to review their current strategy. The review was requested by Council due to concerns relating to the effective management of free RV parking and the potential imbalance with respect to the commercial operation of Kingston Caravan Park. In June 2015 Kingston Council resolved for the consolidation of sites but also loosening of controls at specific sites:

That the Council resolves to give permission under clause 2.12.1 of Bylaw 3 – Local Government Land and clause 2.4 of Bylaw 4 – Roads, for persons to camp in RVs, caravans, wickyvans (sic), campervans, 4 x 4 vehicles with dedicated roof-top camping and camper trailers on the following Local Government land only:

Maria Creek parking area located at Sections 496 & 603, Marine Parade for 24 hours; and
Pinks Beach car park located at the Road Reserve adjacent to Allotment 4 Pinks Beach Road for 3-5 days (p. 3432).

With provisions for self-contained RVs gaining traction across Australia, the Kingston move is a bold one. Temporary tent camping and non-specific camping vehicle occupation of Crown lands still remains problematic in many communities, not least along the Gold Coast Seaway of Qld (Houghton 2015c) and the Wyndham Coast in the East Kimberley of WA (Dupe 2015). In Wyndham, campers squatting on public land have been branded as having a “blatant disregard” for local business and the environment:

Shire figures reveal there have been more than 30 complaints this tourist season regarding illegal campers setting up in quarries, parks and road-side locations — sometimes lighting campfires and leaving rubbish (Dupe 2015).

It certainly cannot be said that there is an overwhelming movement towards freedom camping across all communities and there are a number of dissenting councils (e.g. see District Council of Mount Remarkable 2015; Douglas Shire Council 2015; Shire of Augusta Margaret River 2015; Shire of Denmark 2015) (see also Table 9 – this Chapter). However, it is acknowledged that early adopting councils presented a strong case for freedom of choice camping through this facilitating/trialling period as they continued to progress a range of freedom camping initiatives. Each triggers its own level of public debate. Notable among them are the protracted episodes spectacularly reported through the media and council reports across communities in Victoria (City of Ballarat 2016), Queensland (Fraser Coast Regional Council 2015), Western Australia (City of Greater Geraldton 2015a), and New South Wales (Byron Shire Council 2015a) and Tasmania generally (The Advocate 2017).
City of Ballarat (2016) says their trial provided evidence of the demand for freedom camping including the expenditure the City’s businesses enjoyed as a result. However, over the period Council also become aware of some of the challenges of the freedom camping operation, including concerns regarding perceived risks associated with having Council auspice volunteers to manage and moderate access to the camping site. Discussions with the CMCA commenced regarding the establishment of a CMCA members only RV park. On this basis the CMCA members would be serviced by this new facility and hence, the trial facility at Pioneer Park was terminated with Council satisfied ‘...ceasing the provision of freedom camping removes potential liability risks from Council of this operation on Council land’ (City of Ballarat 2016, p. 83). Council and CMCA agreed on a path to identify an alternative model and location for operating freedom camping in Ballarat; at the time of writing this issue was still subject of a subsequent report to Council. Council anticipates the future provision of a members’ only RV park will also avoid any reputation risk to the City arising from the premature termination of the freedom camping trial (City of Ballarat 2016).

Despite the apparent unrest that inevitably surfaces during most community level discussion on freedom camping, local government developments continued across the facilitating/trialling period. A local government test case from WA is briefly outlined below as example.

### 4.5.5 Local government test case

In contrast to the punitive local government initiatives being pursued by some councils, by May 2015 the City of Greater Geraldton (WA) adopted an RV Friendly Strategy to accommodate freedom camping for those with self-contained vehicles. The proponent of the RV Friendly application was the City Council itself. The City of Greater Geraldton identified the need to grow the visitation figures from RVers and sought to promote partnerships between RV tourists and their City through promotion and expansion of tourism infrastructure and services specifically targeted at that market. A draft strategy, Making Geraldton RV Friendly, was commissioned in June 2014 and presented to Council on 26 August 2104. Council resolved to advertise the draft “Making Geraldton RV Friendly” strategy for a period of 42 days for the purpose of seeking public comment (City of Greater Geraldton 2014). A total of 26 submissions were received, broadly conceptualised as: Private individuals (14); Commercial caravan parks (6); Caravan, campervan and motorhome clubs (2); Community groups (2); and State agencies (2) (see Table 15).
### Table 15 - Categorisation of public submissions to Making Geraldton RV Friendly

**Source:** Adapted from City of Greater Geraldton (2015a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Arguments for</th>
<th>Arguments against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 14  | Private individuals | Park fees considered high in WA.  
Shortage of RV low-cost servicing infrastructure.  
Requires more eco-style low-amenity low-cost facilities.  
Introduce tiered pricing for self-contained RVs.  
Well located parking for access to CBD.  
Allocate long vehicle drive-thru parking.  
More dog friendly places required. | Regulate spaces for overcrowding (Note: this was a cautionary note to an otherwise favourable submission). |
| 6   | Caravan parks    | Provision of public dump point and potable water near CBD (only if provision is by commercial park operator NOT the Council).  
Designated RV only parking near the CBD.  
RV Friendly Town entry signage.  
RV resource guide/package distributed via the Information Centre. | Detrimental to commercial parks  
We are rate payers, employers and community contributors.  
Un-level regulatory playing field.  
Unfair competition.  
Not right to spend ratepayer funds on free services for visitors.  
Caravan park provision exists.  
High public maintenance costs.  
Subsidisation will not add value to Geraldton businesses.  
Parks already have diversity.  
Free-campers are low yield and high cost.  
Vocal minority wanting a free ride.  
Geraldton already considered RV Friendly. |
| 2   | RV clubs         | RV Friendly Strategy will grow visitation.  
Share of visitation will flow on to parks.  
Congratulations Geraldton | Caution about parking inconsistencies across internal precincts. |
| 2   | Community groups | Need for more signage and parking. |                                                                                                               |
| 2   | State agencies   | Advice provided on existing park licensing requirements and proposed legislative review. | Commercial parks have sufficient dumping facility - NO requirement for a public point.  
Suggested consideration of buffer zones for commercial parks. |
Following receipt and consideration of submissions, a further report was brought to Council on 28 April 2015 whereby Council resolved to proceed with the Making Geraldton RV Friendly Strategy (City of Greater Geraldton 2015b). Once again, this resolution did not come without a protracted debate with submissions for and against the proposal presented to Council through the advertised public consultation period. Notably, there were no submissions received from the general Geraldton business community.

The arguments presented to the City of Greater Geraldton by the range of stakeholders are not unique to this local government area alone. Indeed, they are relevant to the case councils in the cross-border zones of New South Wales and Queensland. The same arguments, in various guise, have been presented repeatedly, by each of the stakeholder groups, over the course of many state-level public inquires and many local government lead deliberations. They also resonate at local community town-hall debates, through letters to the editor of community newspapers and social media platforms. This thesis has presented just a sample of the dialogue ensuing through such engagements with freedom camping conversations prominent in many more local communities than have been presented herein.

As testament of the rate of change in freedom camping supply, Table 16 itemises developments across the single month of July 2015. It alone lists 13 pro-freedom camping developments categorised by state, date and location. The individual cases require consideration for their contextual differences but their active trend, volume, and pace of implementation are quite noteworthy in a freedom camping policy arena previously dormant for so long (see The constraining and The acknowledging periods – this Chapter). Sometimes the community conversations are harmonious, particularly if no significant opposition is brought to the table by commercial caravan park lobby or other interest groups such as backpacker hostels and local residents. At other times the communications and commentary are hard fought.

Among the raft of local pro-freedom camping community initiatives across the wider Australian landscape the facilitating/trialling period (2013/14-2017) continues to be punctuated with several further very significant anti-freedom camping initiatives. Some fuelled directly through campaigns conducted by the caravan and camping industry associations (3AW NewsTalk 2015; Hamblin 2015) and some through local council officer interpretations of existing legislations (Camden Haven Courier 2012; Hildreth 2015; Werner 2015) while others are based solely on perceived risk to councils (City of Ballarat 2016). Holding the status quo appears the easier decision for these councils often intimidated by the opposing lobbies. By example, the Showground Trust in Alice
Springs (NT) came under scrutiny from local caravan park owners. They claim the community Trust is operating a camp ground outside of current caravan and camping ground legislation (see Amor 2010; Braitwaite 2015; Ellen 2015; Houston 2015).

The practice of camping at local showgrounds and Crown commons has historical roots and legacies that often extend back for over a century. However, following complaints by disgruntled neighbours, or the local caravan park, that rich historic legacy can be ‘swept away by the stroke of a pen in less than a week’ (Hildreth 2015). Arguments over compliance have seen several showgrounds closed to camping across the facilitating/trialling period for instance Horsham in Victoria (Werner 2015) and Kendall in New South Wales (Camden Haven Courier 2012).

Table 16 - National snapshot - making Australia RV Friendly initiatives
Source: Adapted from Robertson (2015b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JULY 2015</th>
<th>Making Australia RV Friendly – Summary of monthly activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4.5.6 Innovative policy breakthrough

In January 2015, the Western Australian Government released *Nature-based Park Licensing Guidelines* for developers and governments. This piece of policy work stands alone as a significant turning point in a state governments’ comprehension and candour of the freedom camping
market. It signals real-time readjustment to caravanning policy development. This nationally leading action introduces the intention that a flexible approach be taken when assessing the licensing application requirement for new camping grounds in WA. The focus is on the intended market segment for the park and matching type of facilities required. These customer focused requirements balanced with environmental sustainability considerations are generally well received by the freedom camping fraternity. However, serious concern remains for freedom campers over continued camping restrictions on private and public lands. The subsequent caravan park legislative review – *Proposal for Holiday Parks and Camping Ground Legislation* (still in progress at time of writing) provides the platform for airing such concern. Camping outside of approved camping places in WA remains restricted (as per the current legislation under review) at a maximum of three days and still requires landholder’s permission (Department of Local Government and Communities 2015). As stated in the October 2015 edition of a popular caravanning magazine:

> It’s no surprise that both the CMCA and the ACC are scrambling to find out just what the heck is going on, and what the implications of this proposal are for RVers everywhere. To me it seems like something intended to roll across other states and territories (Caravan and Motorhome on Tour 2015b).

As the latter legislative review is still being finalised the concerns expressed by CMCA and ACC are not yet tested. However, their concern over legislative uncertainty within states, inconsistency across states and potential for snowballing interstate legislative imposts is evidenced to be genuine. It reflects the repetitive cry observed to surface through the public hearing and written submission to the 2009 WA inquiry (and those following in other states), that is the need for clearer legislation. Additionally, interpretation of same and the openness by council environment and planning officers to accept and adopt new technologies in RV design, such as waste holding technologies, communications technologies, and RV servicing options technologies (i.e. Kiosk sites), continues to be a barrier for new entrepreneurial entrants and for progress and modernisation in the new camping world.

### 4.6 Discussion

As demonstrated through the individual state inquiries of the acknowledging and facilitating/trialling periods, by 2013/14 the state governments of Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales had each acknowledged that they were not in step with the evolved camping industry and particularly the significant changes that were presenting as RV vehicles increasingly became, populous, luxurious and self-contained. A growth segment of the market was demanding additional choice in camp site supply. Table 17 conceptualises the focus
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of each of the state inquiries through a matrix that ranks three industry sectors (tourism broadly, caravan and camping particularly, and freedom camping specifically) by primary, secondary, and tertiary indicators against the three inquiry priorities of infrastructure and legislation, business sector, and market segment. Though the inquiries were not targeting freedom camping specifically, it became evident that it was an issue worthy of planning and policy consideration. CIAA CEO, Stuart Lamont told *Inside Tourism*, ‘Australians have long gone through a family and product life-cycle of school, gaining an apprenticeship, getting married, buying a house, working 40 years, buying a caravan, or campervan – and then travelling’ (Coventry 2015, p. 12).

Table 17 - Focus of inquiries across acknowledging and facilitating/trialling periods (2006-2017)
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Industry Sector</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Infrastructure &amp; legislation</th>
<th>Business sector</th>
<th>Market segment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vic (2006)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic (2008)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA (2009)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld (2011)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW (2014)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA (2015)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA (2016)</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caravan and camping</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom camping</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside a trend for recreational vehicles becoming more like a home away from home, CIAA head, Stuart Lamont says ‘we are fully part of that traditional Australian psyche’ (p. 12). RVs are now so comfortable, so mobile, and so often self-contained, through freedom camping a growing portion of the drive market is choosing to revert back to their traditional Australian camping
values. These RVers are reengaging with that Australian psyche and ‘camping the long-paddock’\(^6\), with some as full-time mobile RV residents (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 433; see also Caldicott et al. 2017).

While the 2014 release of a Camping Options Toolkit in Queensland provides some non-statutory guidelines for local governments engaged with freedom camping, the policy breakthrough for the phenomenon didn’t come until the 2015 WA release of statutory guidelines for nature parks. These guidelines targeting local governments and developers provide clarity in planning, assessment and licensing requirements for this “new” category of caravan and camping place. The guidelines require a lesser regulatory prescription aimed at matching the supply and demand equation for RV accommodation. This piece of legislative reform is the first state-based legislation that prioritises and accommodates the unique circumstances of freedom camping and freedom campers at an infrastructure and legislative level. Freedom camping had finally made it onto the policy agenda of state politics, albeit in Western Australia.

The common thread permeating old arguments at all levels of the political debate was “threat”. Opposing sides threaten that communities will suffer in the absence of local governments’ partisan support to one camping ideology over the other. Caravan parks threatened that local governments’ support to freedom camping will weaken the industry’s economic foundations, forcing closure of parks and loss of vital infrastructure. Despite the threat, no evidence of park closures directly attributed to freedom camping was actually tendered to any inquiry. Freedom camping advocates threatened loss of economic injection to local communities, through a national RV boycott, if such communities were not seen to welcome freedom camping.

The strength of the RVers’ threat was demonstrated when they started to boycott Monto (Qld) after a major chain caravan park operator published a full-page advertisement in the Central & North Burnett Times despising of the freedom campers. The advertisement was supported by more than a dozen Monto traders and it claimed freedom campers were staying at alternate places away from the commercial parks – at the ratepayer’s expense (Amor 2014). Of the many camper responses to the advertisement, one said ‘never in the freedom of choice camping debate have we ever seen such tactics used to frighten a community into supporting just one business’

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\(^6\) The long paddock is an Australian colloquialism for the historic, tangled and ancient network of travelling stock routes and indigenous song lines that are affectionately extended in present-time to cover all roadside camping (see also Garner 2015; Hawkins 2014b).
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(Amor 2014). But the caravan park operator defended his stance telling Caravanning News, ‘it is not the caravanners we are against – it is our governing bodies who make decisions that do not make sense’ and pointing out ‘the Council had spent over a million dollars of ratepayers' and state money on building the local RM Williams Centre ... now they are going to turn it into a campground... a million dollar free campground at your (the ratepayers) expense’ (Amor 2014).

By late 2015 Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales governments had accepted that camping, including freedom camping, was a vital component of the broader tourism mix. Subsequently it was also an important contributing factor considered within their visions for achieving broader state economic goals. Each moved forward through proactive commitments for review, reform and reframing of camping supply. They did this specifically in support of their drive-tourism strategies, but also in their collective commitments to the principles of the National Long-term Tourism Strategy (Department of Resources Energy and Tourism 2009) that align now to more state-based goals such as those outlined by the NSW Visitor Economy Taskforce (Trade and Investment NSW 2012) and also the Destination Q Blueprint in Queensland (DTESB 2012a). The latter two plans have ambitious goals to double overnight visitor expenditure by 2020.

To achieve these outcomes, the states recognised that they must continue to make available a variety of space options to meet the needs and anticipations of consumers. In respect to camping provision, the states make direct inference that not all consumers are currently catered for and it is imperative to facilitate the development of “new” camping supply alternatives by expanding the type and style of camping options offered to visitors. This is indirectly inferring a market failure (Schumpeter 1947; Sinn 1997) necessitating that additional camping modes are required different to those currently on offer by government and the private sector. Such different offerings are also acknowledged to require different legislations, regulations, policies, guidelines, local laws, business entry incentives and accommodation price-points.

For the first time in Australian camping legislative history, and almost four decades after Shafer’s (1969) US findings, state governments in 2014 were recognising there is no one typical camper; and specifically, no one typical non-commercial (freedom) camper. The Queensland Camping Options Toolkit (DTESB 2014d) specifically acknowledges and values freedom campers for their differences. They are not ‘just those travelling long-haul and touring (a percentage of the point-to-point market also stays in non-commercial sites); are not all retirees (in fact, the largest segment is those still working); and, are not the same markets as those that prefer to stay in commercial sites’ (DTESB 2014d, p. 14).
Additionally, the number of visitors who use freedom camping sites is reported by the Queensland Department of Tourism, Events and Small Business as growing at a slightly faster rate than the drive market as a whole (6% versus 5.4% per year) (p. 14). With tourism growth out-performing the broader Australian economy by 3:1 (Deloitte Access Economics 2016) and the domestic tourism market to regional Australia growing 50% faster than capital city domestic leisure travel (Sheldon 2016) these compounding statistics point towards parallel rapid growth in freedom camping, particularly in regional areas, as a trending tourism sector emerges. Speaking to the Warwick Daily News, Oasis Caravan Park operator and outgoing president of the Queensland Caravan Parks Association, Majella Kahler says:

…the caravanning market is made up of a new, more self-sufficient products and local laws needed to change to be able to keep up with them. Caravans have changed and improved over the years, and so has the consumer. These days most travellers just want... power, water, a safe environment and good lighting. They don’t need much more (Glassey 2016).

In demonstration of the growth in the camping tourism segment, Table 18 illustrates the comparative and growing significance of the freedom camping market as a proportion of total RVers. Potential freedom camping totals across the period 2008 to 2016 are shown to be trending upward from levels of 25% through to 86%.

Table 18 - Freedom campers as a proportion of total RVers
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caravan park</td>
<td>61.0%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>14.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campground</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free camp</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest area</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bush camp</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showground</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed (commercial &amp; free)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>70.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and relatives</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential freedom totals</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table reflects the data collected and reported by each independent study with my addition of the “potential freedom totals” row. It is acknowledged that each study uses different methodologies, criteria, and locations. However, of particular note is the shifting focus also evident with the appearance of the “Mixed (commercial and free)” category in 2011. In
acknowledgement of the new “mixed” market, the Victorian government as early as 2008 sought to attract the international and domestic self-contained vehicle markets by providing further support for the expansion of infrastructure such as information services, dump points and short-term pull-in bays principally along the main transit corridors (Victorian Parliament 2008).

The Queensland case in 2011 exposed the realities and myths that surround grey nomad tourism, concluding that communities gain from this important market segment in many ways (e.g. social, cultural, employment, and volunteer disaster relief) beyond their direct cash injection – not that this injection is insignificant. Despite the expenditure element (tourism revenue receipts) drawing most criticism from proponents of the anti-freedom camping lobby, a range of literature and oral evidence (DTESB 2012c, 2014c; Hillman & Radel 2013; Holloway 2007; Onyx et al. 2010; Patterson et al. 2011) supports the importance of grey nomad tourism to the sustainability of many communities across regional Queensland:

The government acknowledges that grey nomads in campervans and motorhomes require specific infrastructure, including access to potable water and rubbish disposal points. The state understands that, in partnership with local government, it has a significant role to play in ensuring this infrastructure is adequate so that grey nomads continue to travel to remote and regional areas of the state (Morehead 2011, p. 21).

The New South Wales case demonstrated the impact that non-regulated tourism has on regional communities and stresses a desire to draw the phenomenon of freedom camping into the “light” of net-benefit and away from the “dark” of moral panic (Critcher et al. 2013). It concluded that the State needs developed guidelines for self-contained and non-self-contained camping on public lands. The case also exposed the complexity of Crown land management with the government opting to consolidate several pieces of historic lands’ legislation into a simplified modern act befitting of present-day needs. The inquiry also sought to ease regulatory burden on private and public enterprise that wished to develop basic low-cost facilities attractive to freedom campers.

The salience to this thesis of the WA case, is, for the first time within state-based caravan and camping legislation, there is a clear requirement for developer applicants of nature-based parks to recognise, identify, and disclose the specific target market that they wish to attract to their camping facility (DLGC 2015b). This stark shift in licensing requirements is in direct recognition that the caravan and camping market is splintering with distinct segments: commercial; freedom; and, swingers - those that choose to alternate between commercial and freedom sites (see Chapter 2 – Site typology; and Caldicott et al. 2014b). The freedom camping market, in particular, is seeking camping venues with much more primitive facilities than those generally offered within
other categories of caravan parks. This is placing additional demands for new styles of parks in new locations, not least those that can cater to the growing freedom camping market (Figure 18). Each state-based case concurs that the shift to freedom camping poses a challenge to traditional park owners, and their traditional modes of operation and pricing strategies, as freedom campers emphasise low-cost services and a different mix of services than commercial campers.

Figure 18(a) - Primitive bush camping - Birdsville (Qld, AU)  
Photo credit: Author

Figure 18(b) - Primitive bush camping - Carmilla (Qld, AU)  
Photo credit: Author

Figure 18(c) - Primitive bush camping - Quartzsite (AZ, USA) 
Photo credit: Author

Figure 18 - Various domestic and international primitive (freedom) camping sites  
Source: Author
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

Hence the aged and state independent legislative frameworks that deal with camping across Australia are being incrementally amended to assist local government and the private sector to sustainably service a broader suite of camping supply. The 86 years of the enabling period laid the foundation stones for modern freedom camping before the 20 years of the constraining period brought considerable disruption to environments for mobile caravan and camping consumers. The eight years of incremental adjustment observed through the acknowledging period, are now rapidly surpassed by the recent four years of facilitation and trialling of freedom camping. Local governments across Australia are embracing freedom camping at an unprecedented rate and a new period will emerge as “new” societal forces bring “new” influences to bear on the camping industry of the future.

Through the extensive evidence presented, and my conversations with informants, the common ground and common sense approach in taking legislative review and reform up to state governments as a united voice representing all segments and sectors of the industry was not at all apparent; it just did not surface. Collaboration between the opposing lobbies was not supported throughout the participant interviews. This, despite re-confirmation from participants that current legislation, regulation and planning guidelines are unworkable in achieving market equilibrium; a view first arrived at through the 2009 WA Inquiry into the Provision, Use and Regulation of Caravan Parks (and Camping Grounds) (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009). Such a view purports that ‘if the law is not working surely a different approach must be taken’ (pp. 320-321) and the metaphoric pendulum of caravanning legislative reform (Figure 19) must move to a new “stuck” place. The pendulum represents distinct periods of freedom camping policy activity as presented through the conceptual framework at Table 3.

This thesis presents four periods of activity since Federation in 1900 – enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling – and also suggests a future period of regulation that I have coined the “Kiosk” period. The industry may well choose to adopt the advances in “vehicle” and “check-in” style technologies that are already supporting for instance Stellplatz camping provision, and smart phone app payment methods, for self-contained RVs across several international settings. As described earlier through the country comparisons (see section 3.4.5), such a move would prescribe a future regulating period for Australian camping supply to follow. This study reveals that caravanning legislations in Australia have swung away from the enabling period, fully across the ark to the constraining period, with successive interactions of return swing through the acknowledging and now the facilitating/trialling periods. Opportunity presents through further legislative reform for the pendulum to find its equilibrium within a future regulated “Kiosk” period.
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter critically reviewed Australia’s freedom camping history through a framework of guiding legislation and political actions in response to the second objective of the thesis - to explain the legislative developments of freedom camping in Australia focusing particularly on historic elements of supply and demand, since Federation (1900) generally and to auto-mobilisation specifically. Actions and inactions have been described at national, state and local government levels, demonstrating the symbiotic nexus between each but also the barriers that arise through fractures and inconsistencies across policy levels. The chapter was presented across four time periods – enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling. Each was further individually described through focusing events highlighting significant turning points. These points were triggered by societal pressures which influenced the incremental legislative reform.
Chapter 4: Recognising four periods of policy activity

Specifically, seven state-level inquiries were shown to have been influenced by past freedom camping practice. Subsequently future freedom camping practice will be guided by the outcomes of those inquiries together with future societal pressures. While the inquiries were not targeting freedom camping explicitly it became evident through the hearings that freedom camping was certainly an issue worthy of further policy consideration. The social, economic and political divide developing between caravanning industry interests – commercial site suppliers and freedom camping consumers – can no longer be ignored by state government. Freedom camping is coming of age within the broader tourism mix supporting state economies.

The following chapter introduces four local government case studies to further explore freedom camping practice, planning, decision-making and policy implications for local communities.
Chapter 5: Local government engagement

5.1 Introduction

Previous chapters identified four key stakeholder groups (consumer, park operator, local government and state government) involved in the freedom camping public-policy arena. First through an international taxonomy of caravanning and second through a conceptual framework and analytical review of legislative events found to influence freedom camping in Australia. Four legislative periods (enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling) were identified as shaping freedom camping’s domestic history. This chapter addresses the third study objective – to critically analyse how local government, particularly in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, perceives, interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping with reference to public-policy theory. It unravels stakeholder values, particularly those at the community level, as this is where the practice of freedom camping is impacting local towns and is being dealt with by local councils.

Perspectives of local informants (pseudonyms used) from four local government areas are presented: first, from the policy level and second, from the operations level. The views of community leaders and business operators are interwoven where they add context followed by perspectives from state-level government agencies or industry associations. The particular participant voice presented for each case is not endemic only to that case as a wide range of stakeholders have impact across every LGA. However, those presented are carrying common, collective or dissenting messages (as indicated through the narration) and are simply providing contextual vehicles of those messages. At the state agency/association level those presented are the ones which local informants identified as most impacting on their local day-to-day operations. This approach is not to dismiss the important role and influence of other government, industry and user groups but merely appreciates their omnipresence.

The next section introduces the four local cases within their geographic context. Sections 4.3 – 4.6 individually present each case; first through a community profile before unpacking the informants’ stories. Section 4.7 offers a discussion with broad considerations not only to the LGA voices but also reflects upon the narratives from those across the full suite of stakeholders - all 41 informants. Section 4.8 concludes the chapter.
5.2 The local government case studies

Four local government case councils and their associated tourist town are presented in the schema below: Byron Bay, Byron Shire Council (NSW); Lightning Ridge, Walgett Shire Council (NSW); Boonah, Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld) and Birdsville, Diamantina Shire Council (Qld) (Figure 20; see also Figure 4 - Cross-border zone case study locations at Chapter 1).

![Diagram showing the location of four local government councils and tourist towns across Queensland and New South Wales](image)

The LGAs, their towns, geographic locations, landscapes and RV attractiveness (Figure 4) were chosen for the difference among them rather than amassing a common case. Each town experiences positive and negative impacts arising from freedom camping, yet their LGA’s reactions differ. The overt conflict portrayed through the media between the freedom camping consumer lobby and the commercial park operator lobby often overshadows the more covert level of struggle (Bachrach & Baratz 1962) that exists within local government communities. Some issues make it onto the agenda and some do not. Yet they generate new layers of conflict with power struggles between ratepayers and council, between the policy and operations-levels within council and between council and state-level institutions. Giddens (1984) and Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004) suggest that conflict orders of signification, legitimisation and dominance are the interplay of contextual processes of structural political and social change that intersect at a level of political modernisation. The antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) presents as a struggle of opposing needs, drives, wishes and external or internal demands. The next section demonstrates how these struggles manifest around freedom camping within the context of the four individual towns and councils.
Figure 21 - Towns, landscapes and camping places across the four border zone LGAs
Source: Author
5.3 Case study one: Byron Shire (NSW)

5.3.1 Byron Shire Council (NSW) profile

Byron Shire has a population of 32,119 and is the smallest LGA case at just 556 sq kms (see Chapter 1 - Figure 2). Byron Bay with a population of 5,120 is the tourist hub of the Shire and the most easterly town in Australia (see Chapter 1 - Figure 3). Byron is an international tourist destination accessed by Australia’s Highway 1. Reputed for its eclectic lifestyle, alternative culture, surfing, whale watching and music festivals, Byron is a key attraction on The Legendary Pacific Coast (TLPC) tourist drive between Sydney and Brisbane (see Chapter 1 - Figure 3). Byron receives over 1.5 million visitors annually (Destination Byron 2014). The high number of visiting vanpackers that freedom camp in the streets generates social and political angst for the community (Byron Shire Council 2014c; Hansen 2015; Wilson 2012).

Byron Council is in a transitional phase for tourism and recreation planning but currently Byron Township has no formal (approved) camping places for freedom campers. This contributes to the public unrest, specifically within the inner urban Byron Bay environs. Several public and private low-cost camping venues are available within the Shire hinterland, including a Pacific Highway rest area at Tyagarah (see Table 19 – this Chapter). As these venues are away from Byron’s CBD they are not favoured by the vanpackers who prefer to camp more central to the seaside village vibe. Tourism, and its related services of accommodation, food, beverage and attractions is a significant industry sector for Byron Shire. As displayed through Table 19 tourism generated strong employment opportunities in 2013/14 at 15.7% FTE (Full-time Equivalent) positions contributing almost 10% GRP (Gross Regional Product) to the Shire (Lawrence Consulting 2015). Consequently, Byron Shire Council is keen to find solutions to the local tourism unrest and dichotomous local interests in freedom camping (Gardiner 2013a; Grant 2012). The following sections further explain the politics of freedom camping policy in the context of Byron Shire generally and through the perspectives of the informants operating in the political sphere of Byron Bay specifically.

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7 Lawrence Consulting produces detailed modelling of gross regional product for all local government areas of Australia. The model utilises a number of inputs, including: ABS State Accounts; ABS Regional Employment quarterly time series data, ABS Census 2011 and 2006, Place of Work employment data; and, DEEWR small area labour market (SALM) data.
Table 19 - Byron Shire community profile and Byron Bay freedom camping profile

Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shire area (Sq Km)</th>
<th>State Capital - Sydney</th>
<th>Byron</th>
<th>Byron</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>32 119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire area</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>800 km</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 km</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main centres</th>
<th>Major industries</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>Major access</th>
<th>Major attractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Source: Lawrence</td>
<td>FTE (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting)</td>
<td>GRP (%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>Accom &amp; F&amp;B</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>Pacific Highway</td>
<td>Australia’s most easterly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Ewingsdale Rd</td>
<td>point and lighthouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullumbimby</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>Bangalow Rd</td>
<td>Surfing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalow</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Lennox-Rd</td>
<td>Beaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick Head</td>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Music festivals</td>
<td>Eclectic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Arakwal National Park</td>
<td>World Heritage areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom camping areas</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Illegal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Approved by a recognised authority for camping at this site)</td>
<td>(Non-approved but a recognised &amp; tolerated practice at this site)</td>
<td>(Camping occurs in defiance of an authority’s signposts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Tyagarah Rest Area (RMS)</td>
<td>Cosy Corner (NPWS)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts Factory B’packers (PP)</td>
<td>Wategos Beach (BSC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Belongil Beach (PP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Byron Beach (BSC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Byron Streets (BSC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Commercial camping areas</th>
<th>Private Enterprise</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Lands Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay Tourist Village</td>
<td></td>
<td>First Sun Holiday Park</td>
<td>Clarks Beach Holiday Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glen Villa Resort</td>
<td>Suffolk Beachfront</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongil Fields Caravan Park</td>
<td>Holiday Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>Red Devil Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


![Map of Byron Bay](image-url)
5.3.2 Byron Shire Council (NSW) policy-level perspective

In the United States I bought a Bedford van and put a bed in it and travelled up the whole West Coast. I lived out of it. So yeah! I mean, that was basically a home for probably six months. I’ve also been a backpacker in Europe. I probably, I should have said that too (Robert, LG, policy).

Robert, as mayor of Byron Shire starts by recalling his youthful adventures reflecting upon a time when he was carefree and keen to travel the world, experiencing the surf and music scene. He was mindful of his own past freedom camping exploits and thus sympathetic to today’s youth also trying to exercise their freedoms through street camping. Robert was understanding of their youthful desires but his council was struggling all the same to strike a civic balance in servicing visitor and host viewpoints:

It is hard to sustainably provide resources in a balanced form that meets both visitor and community expectations. When I was in Europe I slept sort of rough more than anything else. I’d hitch, then sleep under a tree then go the next day. So I think to a certain point, sometimes when you’re on a certain budget perhaps some of the commercial operators are never going to be able to satisfy that person and bring them into the fold. But it is an interesting dynamic. I think certainly backpackers [backpacker hostels] were slow to see a market in the Wicked [vanpacker] market.

Robert spoke freely about the situation within his Shire and to his Council’s attempts to appease the many stakeholders – those beyond the vanpackers - to local residents and local business houses, particularly the commercial accommodation sectors:

So where I guess this issue about providing a space [for vanpackers] came to our attention was when we were having an increasing amount of street camping. It was becoming more abrasiveness for the wider community. And, in a sense, I think the outrage was because the camping was free, just out and out free, you know? I think they [vanpackers] were doing it because it was free and cheap. They didn’t have to pay: freedom to park in the residential streets and public carparks; freedom to spend all the day on the beach; and freedom to make noise and party hard at night. We were actually getting a lot of complaints from residents.

In response to the complaints, a Resolution of Council (see Byron Shire Council 2012a) was proposed to look at Council’s capacity of ‘even for a night could a space be provided’. One of the excuses given by backpackers was ‘oh we came in late at night and there was nothing really open, so we just sort of stayed’. Robert explained the idea of the resolution was to at least address that “excuse” and to try and formalise a “solution” - ‘let’s see if we can provide a space for a day or two’. However, in the end Council did not go down that path because ‘we found out ourselves it was hard - we didn’t really have much land’.
Robert qualified his council was still very open to finding a piece of land geographically and socially fitting that they can dedicate to freedom camping. On a technical level he maintains it could just be an open car parking space with a toilet. ‘RVs could just rock up and park there’. Or it could be an open field now with some cows on it. Robert says, ‘Let’s use it for some camping, it’s a perfect sort of use’. He advised that Byron Shire, at that time, was in the process of creating a whole new planning scheme, the LEP and he felt ‘all of the stakeholders are kind of waiting to see where, you know our new realities for that take us’. Robert was acknowledging multiple realities had potential and the Byron community simply needed to “unlock” itself from the existing “stuck” place of zero-tolerance to freedom camping. However, he was also mindful of the community feelings, ‘certainly when we started, when we did that resolution you know, there was a bit of commercial angst about it [from caravan parks and youth hostels]’. It was like, ‘well we’re paying rates and providing this, why are you providing, why are you even considering providing a night or so free - that’s our business?’ Robert was quick to answer his critics:

Well clearly you’re charging too much because they don’t want to use you. They’re in the back streets and they’d rather pee behind a tree than use your facilities. Your business model fails them.

Robert acknowledges a lot of RVers are ‘sort of living off their savings, their pensions, or student loans and whatever – you know doing that sort of thing’. But he also thinks ‘it’s just one of those situations where the campgrounds just don’t seem to be touching base, certainly not with younger travellers’. He questioned if the price point was too high or whether what parks offer for that price isn’t enough? ‘I am just not too sure’. Or rather, he considers there is a component of travellers operating on a tight budget and they will simply be ‘very frugal with their dollar’. Robert remained hopeful in the short term Byron Council would progress some of his proposals for alternate camping places. However, his individual liberal views towards freedom camping were not always in step with the moderate view of his community and the authoritarian ideology his council was displaying towards freedom camping at that time. To understand how Robert’s proposals for freedom camping might proceed within Byron Shire I went beneath the policy-level of the mayor to engage at the operations-level through the senior management teams. I was particularly interested in planning and regulation of tourism in Byron Shire and the economic and community development portfolios specifically. Engagement at this operations layer highlighted the important power, and exercise of power, distinction existing between the governing layers of policy-making and policy implementation within councils and across agency borders.
5.3.3 Byron Shire Council (NSW) operations-level perspective

Byron Council, in 2012/13, was still firmly entrenched in conservative constraining practices towards the social freedoms of street camping. They held a zero-tolerance to the practice. Byron’s modus operandi was to stamp it out or move campers along, generally into neighbouring shires or into the main-road rest areas. This approach caused conflict between the shires and also with the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), the state agency responsible for highway rest areas. The highly regulatory operation enforced by staff was in action to policy directives formalised through resolution of councillors. However, the policy was not uniformly accepted as the “best” way to deal with freedom camping. This was particularly evident when the mayor described it ‘a challenging issue’. Nonetheless, council staff are obliged to follow the directives of their council’s resolutions. The person charged with overseeing the regulatory functions for Byron Shire and specifically directives on freedom camping was John (LG, operations) and his story leads this section of the discussion.

John was articulate in describing social impact as the key cause of community unrest from freedom camping in Byron Bay. The Shire had always experienced people camping in its streets and coastal reserves with the practice, in part, stemming from the surfi-hippie culture permeating many coastal villages from the middle of last Century. While the hippie camping may have been acceptable in days gone, due to the increasing volume of vanpackers it was no longer tolerable. Council now gets considerable complaint from residents about people who camp in their streets. John pointed out the camping was, ‘not you know pitch a tent and have the fire outside with a billy on it’ but the “problem” was ‘mostly people sleeping in vehicles’ contrary to visible signposting (Figure 22).

In response to the community concerns, Byron Shire Council was ‘looking into the issue’ and they were trying to work towards some manageable solutions, including the possibility of making provision for the freedom campers. However, John was not so optimistic about Byron’s chances of solving their freedom camping problem alone:

I don’t think too much will change unless we have an area, a parking area where people can go. I think we’ll just be doing much the same thing in five years, chasing our tails. I mean, ah, unless we get clear definition from the state government. You know we’ve [local government] got defined but limited powers. Now that might sound pessimistic but I think it’s just, I suppose being realistic. But if state defined powers came in it might be totally different.
John was advocating for stronger leadership from a higher power than council. He was specifically looking for a policy intervention from his NSW state government. However, despite his previous efforts to escalate the freedom camping matter through the local and regional government associations he lamented his lack of success:

I’m not criticising the Shires’ Association or the Local Government Association or the Northern Regional Organisation of Councils, but we tried to get this issue onto the agenda of the Local Government Association’s annual meeting a couple of years ago. But it didn’t make the agenda. To my knowledge, no, I mean, I’ve not seen it come up in the minutes of any of those associations.

In consideration to the lack of state direction, or even guidance, John conceded he had no option but to ‘take our policy cue ultimately from the elected councillors’ but he expressed concern about the extreme measures some councillors were proposing:

They wanted us to seek powers to tow away vehicles. Um, the state government is not going to give us those powers, and that’s what I’m reporting to Council. Um, now that is right at the other end of the spectrum. From a position of, ‘let’s provide them with somewhere’, to towing them, ‘tow ‘em away. Argg!’
A certain level of frustration was evident as John spoke about the professional dilemma he and his staff face as they go about their daily regulatory duties. The policy, via resolution he states, ‘comes up from Council to us and we’re charged with the responsibility of implementing that policy – we are merely the enforcement line, the foot-soldiers between community and council’. He reflected on the possibility of the policy being thrown on its head almost immediately if there was to be a change of heart within the Council or if it changed through election. When prompted for matters that may promote such a change, John indicated there was definitely lobbying going on but it was almost entirely coming from the community. Or, it was at least community-interest based in respect to increasing the punitive measures towards freedom campers:

Yes, any lobbying happening is all about restricting camping. So, no, the Council position is not likely to turn around anytime soon.

He explained how the lobbying process transfers community interests and sometimes minority interests into policy, but interests nonetheless, can dominate the council agenda. In particular, he showed concern for how this lobbying impacts on his portfolio. He clarified how his compliance program and the workloads of his staff were prioritised:

Well, if it’s something, an activity’s causing danger to life or danger to the environment that’s the very highest priority. But, perhaps a bit above that, even if it is not a critical matter, not that critical all, if a complaint comes via a councillor well that becomes the very highest priority because councillors are the ones who are going to agitate, and run with it.

John sees irony in even having a priorities scale. Particularly if councillors can simply grandstand to get their interests brought to the top of the pile. He suggested there seems to be a “known” way for the community in this shire to get their way, to control the council agenda:

If you want to get something done and this is common, common for camping matters, have a whinge to a councillor. The councillor then, the councillors here seem to, you know, take that up with gusto. It gives them a sense of power or one-upmanship among their fellow councillors. So yes there’s lobbying, it’s from the community and it’s directed to the councillors and they then come to us.

John said the council staff incur this reprioritising situation all the time. This causes conflict within operational areas and also triggers power struggles between the councillors themselves. John’s dilemma in moving the problem of freedom camping off the streets was in finding alternative places for them to camp, particularly when the occupancies at the commercial caravan parks were running at capacity. Evidence in other sectors of street camping (homelessness) demonstrates that introducing “bans” may reduce the visibility of camping in some areas ‘but bans are ineffective when used against populations that have nowhere else to go’ (Petty 2017). Where
could the freedom campers go? What were their options in Byron Shire? John produced a folded colour brochure – ‘here, they go here, there’s only the highway rest area site [at Tyagarah] which is not controlled by us’. John, was literally transferring responsibility for the freedom camping “problem” to another government agency, a state agency, and in so doing, cost shifting and also shifting risk. If the freedom campers were not camping on council tenured lands they did not visibly present as impacting on his urban community and they did not present as a financial nor risk liability for his council. However, the impact this strategy was having on the receiving state agency, the NSW Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and its stakeholders, is presented next.

5.3.4 State agency perspective (NSW) - Roads and Maritime Services

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) is the state authority responsible for national highway system in NSW inclusive of provision and maintenance of the road-side rest areas. Their mandate is state specific and thus the issues they face along with actions and strategies they employ around freedom camping are not restrictive to Byron Shire. They are equally applicable to Walgett Shire as the second NSW case LGA and reflective of those adopted by their sister agency in Qld; the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR). Chris (state, operations) for RMS described two key national criteria in rest area management. The first has a federal founding and is the heavy vehicle safety and productivity package. The second is specifically NSW state founded and is premised on safety and fatigue management for general motorists. The focus is inclusive of what facilities are placed in rest areas but not necessarily about trying to meet every motorists’ needs. By way of example, Chris cites the trialling of commercial vending (i.e. food, coffee, cold drinks) within rest areas but cautions:

Really, what that does is invite more people into the rest areas so we have had a change in users of those rest areas that have vending associated with it. That can be a good thing because we are helping people to have their break, helping people to get refreshment when there might not be other refreshment options around, particularly late at night.

In qualifying ‘when there might not be other refreshment options around’, Chris acknowledged this may open the political door to freedom camping advocates claiming there not to be ‘other camping options around’ when they need to pull up to rest (freedom camp). Accepting that prospect she reinforced RMS ‘would not be wanting to encourage usage of the rest area which limits other people’s opportunity to use it in the way it was designed’. Specifically she was referring to freedom campers infringing on the usability of the rest area by other road users due to overstay parking or camping:

Most of our rest areas don’t have signs regarding time limits at all, but, some rest areas are signed as no camping. We do have a few that would give time restrictions. It might
be 8 hours of parking or something which is probably sufficient for having a sleep in a car. I don’t know, the hours can vary depending on the need. But yes, our more stringent ability is to actually put some times of parking there but I don’t know whether we would change the behaviour of that many campers, or would be campers. We might just move them on to another place rather than the place they were looking at. Really, I think that’s all we would achieve and this could very well conflict with our first principle of fatigue management.

Figure 23 - Various signposting for main road rest areas for fatigue management.
Source: Author

Freedom camping at the rest areas ‘is not the biggest problem we have got, not by a long way’. Chris explained for RMS to pay a lot of attention to policing the camping it would ‘only come when
there is an operational issue, generally following a complaint’. The public are not backward in letting RMS know that ‘yes, camping does happen’. Countering the public complaint, Chris advised freedom campers also act as a ‘sort of natural surveillance’ for RMS, reinforcing Foucault’s (1975) panopticon effect. When travellers see the rest areas are busy she believed that helped to reduce vandalism. There is some merit ‘in having people camping who can report that’. Acknowledging camping does happen at the rest areas, but weighing up the disadvantages over the advantages, Chris confirmed RMS has not moved to a policy-level position on camping as yet. Even so, she suggested:

We have got an increasing use by RV vehicles and campers over the previous years. The issue is growing so we will obviously have to resolve that further down the track. The population is growing and getting older and more retirees are buying RVs and using the rest stops. Our people will be looking into this aspect at an interagency level in future.

Chris was conscious of the need for dialogue and engagement within and across state bureaucracies or agencies to manage the freedom camping phenomenon. Without itemising any specific event that might trigger more serious attention to a policy directive within her agency Chris referred back to the RMS core objectives of safety and fatigue management. ‘If any operational issue triggered concern over these aspects we would certainly look into it’. But in all honesty, she qualified, ‘unless it was anything other than an isolated operational issue it just wouldn’t be a factor for us’. She was not aware of any specific political campaign or lobbying to restrict freedom camping in the highway rest areas but did acknowledge there is ‘always two sides of the story’ and at the moment ‘we do not have any policy addressing that [freedom camping] really’.

In the absence of a specific RMS policy on freedom camping Chris did envisage change for the future as ‘things will move a little bit because usage is one thing that will really dictate change’. For the RMS there are obviously a lot of factors to take into consideration. She specifically mentioned ‘people like backpackers’ she thought ‘probably try do things on the cheap’ and also seek to have an experiences ‘without a lot of planning’. She offered the opinion ‘there is a growing group of people who are making deliberate choices to use non-commercial accommodation’ and she observed them to ‘just camp in the highway rest areas and even the public streets at times’. RMS is a land manager that controls a vast network of default freedom camping venues through their road-side rest areas. This transport based bureaucracy in NSW, along with the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) in Queensland, through their collective road-side rest areas network are arguably the largest providers of freedom camping venues in Australia. Subsequently they often find their own internal legal statutes are themselves sandwiched between conflicting
external instruments. First, inter-agency conflicts between caravan and camping legislations mandated for example by the NSW State Department of Planning and also the administrative enforcement of local governments in NSW, the Division of Local Government. Second, and not least, the accommodation supply-side conflict that grows with increasing public provision of camping sites versus private camping site providers. As a consequence, this state agency, RMS, is very much involved in the freedom camping phenomenon.

5.4 Case study two: Walgett Shire Council (NSW)

5.4.1 Walgett Shire Council (NSW) profile

Walgett Shire in northwest NSW is located 675 kilometres from Sydney (see Chapter 1 – Figure 2). It covers an area of 22 007 sq kms and has a population of 8 300. Lighting Ridge, the Shire’s primary tourist town of 2 494 residents is situated in a semi-arid region sandwiched between the rich cotton growing belt of the Moree Plains to the east and the prime cattle growing Channel Country to the west. As displayed through Table 20, agriculture in 2013/14 generated the highest employment ratio for the local government area at 31.7% FTE and the highest GRP ratio at 22.8% (Lawrence Consulting 2015). Lightning Ridge is also home to the world-famous Black Opal, hence it is popular with RVing tourists and particularly those that enjoy fossicking. The town is serviced by five commercial caravan parks and one small, and informal, RMS freedom camping site on the Leichhardt Highway (see Table 20). As this site is some 10 kilometres from the town centre, indiscriminate camping does occur within the closer urban environs at prohibited locations such as the Artesian Bore Baths, a major attraction for Lightning Ridge (see Table 20).

Lightning Ridge is unusual among the four case studies as many residents live on Crown mining leases. Under New South Wales Crown lands legislation, leasehold residents are only temporary custodians to their respective mining leases and are prohibited from building permanent structures. Some of the more quirky “temporary” houses are very much part of the tourism appeal and attraction of Lightning Ridge. As displayed through Table 20 tourism services, including accommodation, generated a modest 6.9% FTE jobs but only contributed 3.3% of GRP for the local government area in 2013/14 (Lawrence Consulting 2015).

The following sections further explain the politics of freedom camping policy in the context of Walgett Shire generally and through the perspectives of the informants operating in the political sphere of Lightning Ridge specifically.
Table 20 - Walgett Shire community profile and Lightning Ridge freedom camping profile
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shire area Sq km</th>
<th>State Capital</th>
<th>Total pop.</th>
<th>Lightning Ridge</th>
<th>Lightning Ridge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22,007</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>8300</td>
<td>690 km</td>
<td>700 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main centres</th>
<th>Pop. 2013/14</th>
<th>Major industries (Source: Lawrence Consulting)</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>Major access</th>
<th>Major attractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walgett</td>
<td>2267</td>
<td>Acom / F&amp;B</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Kamarloai Highway</td>
<td>Hot Artesian Bore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge</td>
<td>2494</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>Castleroigh Highway</td>
<td>Opal fossicking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collarenebri</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Collarenebri Rd</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burren Junction</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Castleroigh Highway</td>
<td>Hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come by Chance</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carinda</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom camping areas</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Illegal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Low or no cost sites)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Approved by a recognised authority for camping at this site)</td>
<td>(Non-approved but a recognised &amp; tolerated practice at this site)</td>
<td>(Camping occurs in defiance of an authority’s signposts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turn-off Rest Area (RMS)</td>
<td>The Bore Baths (CT) Airport (WL)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial camping areas</th>
<th>Private Enterprise</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Lands Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Licensed caravan parks)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opal Caravan Park</td>
<td>Lightning Ridge Tourist Park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crocodile Caravan Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outback Resort &amp; Caravan Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lorne Station</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(RMS) Roads and Maritime Services; (NPWS) National Parks & Wildlife Services; (WL) Western Lands; (PP) Private Property; (CT) Crown Trust
5.4.2 Walgett Shire Council (NSW) policy-level perspective

I’ve never really wanted to do the whole RV thing. No, I haven’t retired yet so I’ve never freedom camped, no, no way, I’ve camped on Nuagee Trail in New Guinea that’s about it (Maurice, LG, policy).

Walgett Shire mayor, Maurice was a non-RVer and hence not a freedom camper. Instead he preferred to fly somewhere, book into a hotel and then hire a car to drive around. Not being so familiar with the camping vocabulary, Maurice admitted he didn’t quite understand the meaning of the term freedom camping but he conjectured it was referring to people who were in their older or retirement age, who were travelling around Australia, and looking for somewhere to stay. Hence his earlier reference to ‘not being retired’. When prompted by the term “free-camping” he was quicker to respond, ‘well free-camping is camping on the side of the road or somewhere like that’. He proceeded to confirm Walgett Shire does experience quite a lot of free camping and it is the source of some debate within Council:

Mainly the costs of things to us as the Shire. I know a lot of the grey power [nomads] don’t like paying much. They like primitive camping grounds that are at no cost. Some spend a little bit of money, but they’re not big spenders.

Aware of the ranging camping market demographics, Maurice relayed an anecdote about his daughter’s experience as she drove around Australia though only in her late 20’s:

She loved that freedom part too because she was broke most of the time. But I don’t notice, I guess they [younger freedom campers] do come up to Lightning Ridge but you don’t notice a huge lot of them. Not many of that younger brigade, it’s the older ones mainly.

Reflecting on the economic value of the grey nomads to his community Maurice proceeded to discuss the aforementioned debates, particularly those which occur within the Council Chamber:

We’ve skirted around the edges of it a bit as the commercial caravan parks get a bit jumpy about having the freedom caravans, I suppose you’d call them, around the place as the other ones [commercial campers] pay.

This demarcation between the accommodation “payers” and the “non-payers” demonstrates relevance when Maurice talked about his Council’s costs for maintaining facilities that attract the campers – particularly the hot artesian bore baths:

The bore baths in Lightning Ridge which are a pretty good tourist set up, we get no money out of that. We get all the costs. This is the Council and then the one at Burren Junction, we don’t get any money on that and its cost us a fair bit of money over the years that one.
Chapter 5: Local government engagement

Considering these “out-of-pocket” costs to council I asked Maurice to also reflect on costs to the RVers in accessing the outback. I was keen to understand if the long distances coupled with fluctuating fuel prices were having an effect on freedom camping tourism in Lightning Ridge:

No, there is no fuel price effect. Visitor numbers increased I’d say 100% in the last ten years. It’s infrastructure that makes the difference – less dirt roads. You can drive around Australia in a damn car if you want. In the last 20 years I suppose there’s a lot of bitumen gone down out here, like from Walgett to Bourke and then from Bourke down to Cobar and the Kidman Way. Then you go north to drive up towards Cunnamulla in Qld. There’s a lot of bitumen out there these days.

Maurice was mindful of the increasing and changing traffic, pushing ever further westward following the newly laid black tar and this was placing increased financial burdens on his Council operations. ‘We get no state government subsidies for tourism infrastructure, or even state government acknowledgement that freedom camping is impacting on regional communities’. I probed him over the level of conversation he has with his peers or that he observes at the regional and state government levels about freedom camping:

No you never hear much about it. They [regional and state government] never seem to talk about it. I mainly work in the Outback-ROC [Regional Organisation of Councils] covered area and I never hear them complain about any of it. The freedom camping stuff, it really just hasn’t got onto the higher policy-level agenda yet. I wouldn’t say so, anyway. I’ve never seen much in the meetings about any motions about it. No, I’ve never come across them.

Maurice did later reflect a vague memory of some correspondence he came by, not clearly remembering its origin but sensing the Division of Local Government, pertaining to road-side camping, particularly at main-road rest areas:

Well there was a policy statement⁸ came out, must be a few years ago, I don’t know whether it was local government or someone else, I don’t know whether it was even bought in, but it was mentioning changes to camping on the side of the road now, like you couldn’t camp on the side of the road. I don’t know whether it was really enacted or if it was just put out there to see how we would react I think it was some correspondence that came across - I was reading about it.

Very conscious of the long travelling distances in the outback and sparseness of communities with built resting infrastructure Maurice was cynically inquisitive of the proposed intent of the circular and his perception of it as a shift in policy setting:

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⁸ Maurice’s reference to a policy statement was actually a circular released by the NSW Department of Planning in 2010 and further released by the NSW Division of Local Government in 2014 (see Appendix 3).
Chapter 5: Local government engagement

Well OK, but firstly, how do you get on with the 8 hour rule of driving? Like you get long distances out here. Second now, who’s going to police it?

He was unsure why such a policy or local government guideline may have been issued in light of his lack of recall to any community consultation over it. Road-side camping wasn’t causing particular issues in his community nor were there complaints coming across the mayoral desk from community members:

No, camping is not an issue really. I do get a bit of background music from the commercial operators [caravan parks] that they don’t like the freedom ones. Well Lightning Ridge is a good example but you know, you know where that Stanley Steel Sculpture is, yeah, out on the Castlereagh Highway [see Table 2 – this Chapter]. Yeah well, there’s a lot of them [freedom] camp out there and the operators in town have gone to pieces about that.

Due to the sparseness of resting facilities across the outback Maurice sympathised some campers were also trespassing onto private properties looking for their freedom camp but he was not concerned over this level of activity within his Shire. Although he acknowledged such camping, such boundary infringements, did occur he did not think it was a contributing factor to the roadside camping circular:

They do stay, the campers do stay near a bridge which is on the big wide-bore. It’s on my territory but it doesn’t worry me. There hasn’t been any complaints from neighbours. Whenever they camp on my place, they’re usually pretty well behaved.

Acknowledging freedom camping was happening in innumerable public and private locations across the Shire, including the RMS main-road rest area near Lightning Ridge, Maurice indicated the Commission of Western Lands had approached him about the prospect of formalising commercial camping on the leased properties. ‘They did write some letters to me in the past to see whether we’d be interested in letting caravanners go down onto the river, asking whether we’d be interested in doing that’. He explained, out in the western shires the properties are leased from the Crown:

We have the lease in perpetuity from Western Lands. It has been going around forever. It is run by the Western Lands Commission out at Dubbo. Western Lands you see makes up 42% of the state. But we were a bit reluctant on that one, to introduce commercial camp sites. I don’t know whether they got much, what’s the word, people being encouraged but I don’t know of any around here.

Rather, Walgett Shire did consider opening more public sites but implementing a small charge or asking for donations for the camping privilege:
We’ve thought about it at times we should charge for some of these things but then we earn the problem of making sure the [donation] box stays there! Yeah that’s right. We may end up doing it on a couple of sites. Like it costs us a fair bit of money all this and we don’t really know what our benefits are.

Walgett Council was also open to supporting private entrepreneurs to develop commercial low-cost provision for the freedom campers, additional and at opposite ends of the facilities/cost spectrum (see Chapter 3 - Figure 11: Australian campsite matrix) to those commercial operations already in existence. With Lightning Ridge attracting increasing volumes of campers and with a proportionate number of them seeking camping options outside of the commercial model, Maurice thought a low-cost facility would address the interests of Western Lands and appease the unrest from commercial caravan parks ‘but no, the local operators still were not happy with us encouraging any other form of camping near town’. To qualify that statement, Maurice advised a development application for a new private camp ground had actually passed through Council in August 2014. The proponent of the development application (DA):

... was a fellow Walgett Shire councillor and council representative from Lightning Ridge ... it has gone through with a DA. They put a DA application in for it. Which will be a low-cost ..., I suppose, it will be comparative cost to the others or a bit less.

His elaboration to low-cost and comparative pricing, prompted further query to the legislative process and if he believed the current caravan and camping legislation in NSW was flexible enough to accommodate low-cost developments or would the burden of red and green tape (regulation) make such developments economically unsustainable for private enterprise:

Yeah, it passes all the rules. It’s gone through. I don’t think we’ve, we haven’t done anything that makes it, what’s the word – more competitive against the others. No it will be, it will be kind of, competing against the others and I thought that’s a way of putting it. It’s been approved and now they’ve got to start the building phase.

Maurice’s pragmatic approach to freedom camping was reflected through his Shire’s moderate endeavours to openly engage with the practice in the isolated communities (Burren Junction and Collarenebri) while treading more cautiously within Lightning Ridge where the interests of private operators were seen to have a strong influence on public camping policy. My endeavours to seek an interview with the DA applicant for the newly approved low-cost private camping facility in Lightning Ridge were repeatedly unanswered leaving me to speculate on the politics between the applicant, considering he was a councillor, and other private caravan park operators in Lightning Ridge.
5.4.3 Walgett Shire Council (NSW) operations-level perspective

Gail (LG, operations) for Walgett Shire was very quick to admit, ‘oh, we have lots of people that sleep, sleep overnight on the roadsides here’. With particular reference to the Castlereagh Highway site near Lightning Ridge earlier referenced by the mayor, Gail confirmed, ‘you know we’re told by RMS that people are legally allowed to camp on the side of the road for up to two nights’. She observed it was predominantly caravanning campers using the Lightning Ridge site but sometimes road trains stopped over there as well. She reinforced the site’s purpose was intended for road-side rest and not a camp ground but it was very popular for camping all the same:

I don’t know why they do it but some RVs sit right on the shoulder of the road even though there’s more open areas, plenty of spots you can pull up. You see some vans that are definitely there for two or three days. Sometimes they’re there for a week or so. Um, that’s their target. That’s their cheap and easy accommodation out on the fringe of Lightning Ridge.

Acknowledging freedom camping happens at the RMS rest areas Gail also cautioned the controversy it creates. ‘If Council started putting up signs saying you know, “Freedom Camping Area” or something like that I think we’d be in for a bit of debate on our hands with the private caravan parks in town’. However, she described a broader schema of freedom camping she sees within her Shire, and not just those relative to the RMS road-side rest areas and not just those specific to tourism:

We’ve also got the Burren Junction bore baths where a lot of people sleep over and take advantage of the free camping available to them. Um, we’ve also got mining fields where people squat semi-permanently as well. So we’ve got a whole range of “freedom camping” concepts (laughs) happening. Oh, freedom camping in tourism is a new trendy term but it’s just a phrase describing something I’ve seen here in the Shire for more than 20 years.

Gail recalled the history of the Burren Junction bore baths; ‘they’ve been there for a hundred years no doubt. It was originally a travelling stock route and camping place for travelling stock back in the early nineteen hundreds’. She said it was now very common to see sixty to eighty RVs camping at the Junction each night during the winter season. But warned ‘if a tangible complaint was received about someone living there for an extended period or starting to do stupid things with guns or dogs or rubbish the Council rangers would move them on’. Burren Junction is now Council controlled land with pre-existing travelling stock route camping rights that is causing Walgett Shire considerable cost:
Well, we’ve walked into the noose that was pre-existing and conveniently handed to us by the state government and, it’s well, a bit of it is unfenced and people continue stray onto Crown land and private property but they don’t get hunted from there. We don’t hunt them.

And further she described another form of dual purpose space sharing at Collarenebri that hosts a recently upgraded freedom camping facility. A new parking area recently built on Crown land for the football grounds has been dual purposed for low-cost camping in designated areas:

If you have camping on Crown land technically there’s application exemption from the requirements ordinarily applied to private camping grounds under Section 68 of the Local Government Act. Um, but we would prefer people camp within the designated areas hence we’ve got a sign saying “Camping only permitted within the designated areas”. Um, but people are people and they ignore signs (laughs quietly).

Gail was very conscious of the potential for conflict between the Council and the commercial caravan parks in respect to Council’s active development and promotion of freedom camping venues such as Burren Junction and Collarenebri. Walgett Shire was actually going against the national trend of declining caravan site capacity with Gail indicating that ‘camping capacity in our Shire has significantly increased maybe even doubled’. This she mainly attributes to improvements to freedom sites in the smaller communities of the Shire plus ‘one big brand new caravan park in Lightning Ridge, so, yeah, we’ve had one new one open and one close but the overall net number of spaces has gone up’.

Gail further explained the legislative difference between the private and public developments and how this difference was causing conflict, particular in Lightning Ridge. She reiterated as the Collarenebri site was ‘on the old stock route, it didn’t technically need to comply’ with the Local Government (Manufactured-Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005, even for primitive camping grounds for self-contained RVs. In contrast she explained a private enterprise application scenario for a similar low-amenity, low-cost level camp ground to highlight Council’s powers to approve “exempt” development based on individual merit. Council requests of the applicant:

Tell me how are you going to manage the area? How are you going to make sure you only have the self-contained vehicles? If you can, if your merit stacks up, we’ll put a rubber stamp on nearly anything. Um, but you know, if I get a wholly reasonable application the more likely it is to get approved. It’s just got to go through our merit assessment under section 79C so discussion we’d have and if it sounded like it had some sort of merit or thought process behind it and it was half reasonable, we’d probably put a rubber stamp on it.
Chapter 5: Local government engagement

Gail was inferring here that through Walgett Shire’s local approvals policy, Council has the power under Section 79C of the *Local Government Act 1993* to write their own exemptions provisions normally required under section 68. The challenge for Council is that if they write in an exemption provision it then needs approval from the NSW Division of Local Government (DLG). Gail’s experiences in dealing with the state agency in seeking their approvals were not so positive:

The DLG are a mob of ..., they’re not particularly broadminded in terms of minimising red tape or working with rural councils to get exemptions in place. Um, they’re more bound up in (laughs) bull shit than facilitation.

Even after she described putting a particularly strong argument up to DLG, trying to get approval exemptions in the Shire, ‘they just missed the bloody point’. Gail was frustrated with, in her words, ‘the belligerent attitude from the state’. She described the Division as holding power over local governments rather than empowering councils, assisting them to effect positive change in their approvals processes. Gail continued to express frustration with her attempts to harness planning and policy collaboration both between individual councils and between the levels of government:

Hey just ah, ---. You don’t get local governments to share views. Every man and his dog is going slowly in different directions, or significantly different directions so, --- I’ve had a fair go at the local approvals policy trying to get some stuff written into our local approvals policy endorsed by the DLG to reflect what our community expects and how we do it. I couldn’t get the DLG to budge.

Gail resigned herself to accept ‘it’s one of those things you can spend an endless amount of time trying to achieve, to chase legislative reform’ but pragmatically she concedes, ‘um, you just run out of time after a while, yeah’. The bottom line for Walgett Shire was freedom camping, as an issue worth spending too much time with, ‘was not really on our horizon as being a major concern to the community, so the care factor is pretty low’. She did concede, ‘there may well still be, through legislative reform, an opportunity to put the weight back onto state government in seeking their support to bring about our required policy change’ but Gail had exhausted her avenues with the DLG in regard to freedom camping. Subsequently, I approached the NSW DLG to ascertain their perspective on freedom camping and to learn of their involvement or adjudication of such matters at either an individual council level such as those described by Gail, or across the board at a state-wide level.

5.4.4 State agency perspective (NSW) - Division of Local Government

Wesley (state, policy) admitted freedom camping was something DLG monitors but it was not necessarily an issue they would try to get heavy handed over. Wesley proposed from a policy perspective, the discussion that could be had is, ‘what is the value as opposed to the cost and
should councils be subsidising this form of camping accommodation’. One challenge Wesley described was that of the media agitation about freedom camping though he was unaware of any actual or hard evidence to costs/benefits upon which to formulate policy:

I’ve got experience in cost-benefit analysis. I can derive a cost benefit analysis but that’s a challenge in terms of when you’re looking at it in this space. It’s very hard to articulate the value from a council perspective about um promoting, or not promoting freedom camping. There’s an argument about it but I reckon, I’ve not seen anything that’s come in that’s ah, said, ‘here’s the value’, and ‘here’s what it offers a council’.

Wesley was not particularly advocating for or against freedom camping but cautioning individual councils do not always fully understand their real costs and benefits from hosting the activity. Kath (state, policy), also from the DLG, felt the councils which are successful in developing, or at least promoting, the freedom camping grounds are the ones doing it in consultation with their community and particularly the private operators, despite the complexity of different legislations:

They are actually bringing the private camping ground operators into the “tent” when they’re developing, for want of a better term, um, during their policy development phase. It makes it easier for councils to articulate a policy position as it’s more amenable to the commercial operators because it’s been done in partnership.

Both Kath and Wesley acknowledged freedom camping does generate a cost and benefit debate. To find the balance for individual communities was recognising there is something of value and something of cost. However, they articulated clearly it was not DLG’s intention to get into the debate on whether there is an actual impact or just what the broader tourism impact of freedom camping might be. They reiterated for some councils it was just a case of placing freedom camping into the “too hard basket” without adequate consideration of the consequences to their lack of direct action, or despite their deliberate action to do nothing.

Wesley said the Division would only get involved when the effect of freedom camping was demonstrating a more specific impact on the service provision of local government. For example, the impact on the ratepayers or the impact on the other businesses ‘cos that tends to be when we get involved yeah, cos that’s essentially what, what’s driving us’. Wesley believed a lot of the councils assume a tourism industry is a good thing, and agreed in some circumstance and some communities it maybe that tourism is a good thing. But he also questioned whether sometimes there’s an articulation of tourism being good thing without understanding it.

It is the quantifiable benefits void described by Wesley, that Kath suggests is the reason a lot of councils don’t want to take a formal policy decision on freedom camping: concerned ‘it’s actually
going to be controversial’ and the controversy will vary broadly across the state as already demonstrated through the cases of Byron and Walgett Shires. Kath suggests because some councils go out to their community and consult broadly they will have a formal policy because they’ve talked to people about it and at the town level, the community says, ‘yes we do want to encourage people to come here and stay at low cost because we think this is, you know, good, good economically, or for tourism, or whatever’.

Kath also described examples of freedom camping policy decisions where maybe the council ‘hasn’t sold it’ and the town ‘isn’t as supportive’, or, ‘doesn’t like the loss of amenity issues’. In some circumstances ‘the councils may possibly just turn a blind eye um, to some of this stuff or they’ve simply got other priorities. Councils are across so many different areas’. But she was quick to reinforce councils can’t just simply ignore the legislation:

> Under the Local Government Act 1993, and further, the Manufactured-Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings Regulation 2005, councils must be mindful of their obligations. They must make active decisions albeit decisions that may reflect various departures from Regulation 2005.

In contrast to the frustrations Gail (LG, operations) of Walgett was expressing in trying get local approvals exemptions endorsed by the DLG, Kath was openly suggestive that such deviation from the Act were in fact permissible, based on individual merit. She would not be drawn on matters pertaining to a specific council though she corroborated with Wesley it was only in circumstances when decisions are taken inappropriately by councils or in a haphazard way or without due consideration of the Act, that the DLG was obligated to respond, ‘to intervene’ on behalf of the state. It was only when a council decision, or indecision, brings consequences to ratepayers and/or commercial operators (e.g. caravan park operators) giving rise to a ‘certain level of um, noise’, from such quarters of the community that the Division would act.

Kath’s mention of intervention triggered discussion on the planning circular (see Appendix 3 - Department of Planning 2010) that Maurice, mayor of Walgett Shire, mentioned. This circular was issued to all NSW local governments in 2010 (me being a personal recipient while in my previous local government role). Kath did not elaborate on the impetus for the circular in 2010 other than to say there was a further decision made within the DLG, again in early 2014, after ‘unspecified representations across government’. The collective NSW state agency decision was to support the lead agency, that of the Department of Planning, in a second issuing of the circular. Kath asserted ‘as officers we are simply duty-bound in just rearticulating the status quo’. This she reinforced was that existing legislation ‘under Section 68 of the Local Government Act 1993’ provided for ‘people
wanting to set up a camping ground’. As applicants must apply for approval through council Kath suggested any avoidance of that process provides ‘the legislative basis I guess to what we do’. She also reflected upon other agencies and their legislative parameters saying, ‘camping ground regulations are actually managed by the Department of Planning, not us’. The claim to “lack of ownership” was common across the study participants – ‘not my problem if it is not in my backyard’ (see Chapter 4 – Byron Shire (NSW) operations-level perspective).

Wesley reinforced, ‘the sort of intervention brought on through the planning circular rarely arises for the Division’. Only when it comes to the attention of the Division that a council’s management (or mismanagement) of an issue such as freedom camping is questioned would they get involved:

> Whether it is raised by stakeholders or otherwise. So we don’t have any, there’s no real policy, but it tends to be when it has impacts on notions of competition [competitive neutrality] it comes to us. Although we’ve issued a circular in this it was driven by identification of a need so it was, to an extent, it was reactive. Yes, I think it’s fair to say, yeah, we are probably reactive in the space.

Wesley reiterated that the circular was ‘not necessarily to reconfirm, not necessarily to confirm but just rearticulate the status’ in respect to the existing legislative basis to camp ground development in NSW. He would not be drawn on, or into, the politics of the lobby prompting the reissue of the circular in 2014 other than to say:

> At no point when we went to rearticulate the NSW government’s policy position did someone suggest to me the policy framework had holes in it. Because I think you can still do the freedom camping or the camper can still do that, entirely consistent with the terms of the policy propositions we’ve articulated.

He clarified the circular’s purpose was not to raise concern over a “movement” by camping consumers. Instead, it was directed at councils as land managers, as custodians of the Crown land:

> Here’s your obligations as a council and these are general, most of them are generic obligations under legislative land management that you need to be mindful of.

This clarification responds to concerns in Walgett where Gail (LG, operations) earlier remarked on the complexity of the legislation, and further, which pieces of legislation relate to which pieces of land. In support, Kath (state, policy) agrees ‘because management of camping grounds on Crown lands is different from council managed land, private lands, and, of course RMS land’ Kath and Gail were articulating not just complex management but multi-layered management over, across and between governmental agencies ranging from local, state and federal, not least in legislative and land tenure domains. Of note, the DLG is not a land manager. It does not own land upon which camping takes place. Rather, it is an advisory agency to other departments and local government.
5.5 Case study three: Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld)

5.5.1 Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld) profile

Scenic Rim Regional Council with a population of 39,463 is located within the heart of an ancient volcanic caldera in south east Queensland (see Chapter 1 – Figure 2). The caldera forms part of the subtropical World Heritage Gondwana Rainforests and the Green Cauldron National Landscape (TRC 2012). Boonah, has a population of 2,773 and is an important tourist attractions and services hub of the Scenic Rim. Just 75 kilometres from the state capital of Brisbane, Boonah is within day-tourism range of approximately five million residents from southern Qld and northern NSW.

As displayed through Table 21, agriculture in 2013/14 was the most significant industry sector to the local government area generating 12.3% of FTE employment and contributing 13.4% of GRP (Lawrence Consulting 2015). The council also embraces tourism and particularly welcomes special interest groups at the Boonah show grounds and sports complex. This public venue, which also has a commercial caravan park annexed is right in the heart of town. Boonah commonly host state and national RV rallies. The town is additionally serviced by three local, and formally approved, RV freedom camping places plus one unofficial site along the Cunningham Highway (see Table 21). The broader Scenic Rim Regional Council also caters to RVing with more than a dozen other free or low-cost camping areas scattered beyond the commercial services offered through caravan parks in neighbouring towns. Tourism related services within the Scenic Rim generated the third highest employment ratio at 7.7% FTE in 2013/14 but only contributed 3.8% GRP to the local government area (Lawrence Consulting 2015).

The following sections further explain the politics of freedom camping policy in the context of Scenic Rim Regional Council generally and through the perspectives of the informants operating in the political sphere of Boonah specifically.
Table 21 - Scenic Rim Council community profile and Boonah freedom camping profile

Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shire area</th>
<th>Sq Km</th>
<th>State Capital</th>
<th>Brisbane 75 km</th>
<th>Boonah</th>
<th>Boonah</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total pop.</td>
<td>39 463</td>
<td>Other (NSW)</td>
<td>Sydney 862 km</td>
<td>How do RVers get there</td>
<td>Why do RVers go there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main centres</th>
<th>Pop. 2013/14</th>
<th>Major industries</th>
<th>(Source: Lawrence Consulting)</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>Major access</th>
<th>Major attractions</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Beaudesert</td>
<td>6013</td>
<td>Acorn / F&amp;B</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>Mt Lindesay Highway</td>
<td>Lake Moroon</td>
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<td>Boonah</td>
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<td>Retail</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Cunningham Highway</td>
<td>Lake Moogerah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kooralbyn</td>
<td>1654</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>Boonah-Fassifern Road</td>
<td>Main Range National Pk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalbar</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Boonah-Rathdowney Road</td>
<td>Spicer’s Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canungra</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
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<td>Tamborine</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>434</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Cunninghame Gap</td>
<td>Queen Mary Falls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aratula</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>Boonah-Fassifern Road</td>
<td>Main Range National Pk</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Freedom camping areas</th>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
<th>Illegal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Low or no cost sites)</td>
<td>(Approved by a recognised authority for camping at this site)</td>
<td>(Non-approved but a recognised &amp; tolerated practice at this site)</td>
<td>(Camping occurs in defiance of an authority’s signposts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boonah Show Grounds (CT)</td>
<td>Fassifern Memorial Park (DTMR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalbar Show Grounds (CT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boonah Bicentennial Park (CT)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<th>Commercial camping areas</th>
<th>Private Enterprise</th>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Lands Department</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Licensed caravan park)</td>
<td>Lake Moogerah Caravan Park</td>
<td>Boonah Show Grounds</td>
<td>Bigriggen Park</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lake Maroon Holiday Park</td>
<td>Caravan Park</td>
<td>Flanagan Reserve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(DTMR) Department of Transport & Roads; NPWS: National Parks & Wildlife Services; (PP) Private Property; (CT) Crown Trust
5.5.2 Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld) policy-level perspective

We probably don’t have a policy for no cost [freedom] overnight accommodation. We tend to believe people should stay in developed accommodation. I just don’t think freedom [camping] is where we are heading in the long term. I think overnight camping should be in commercial facilities in my point of view (Barry, LG, policy).

Barry, as the mayor of Scenic Rim Regional Council advised his Council was not in favour of freedom camping, preferring instead to support the local caravan parks. Barry also indicated he was not a freedom camper himself and was not personally interested in the caravanning lifestyle at all. He did accept it was the travel mode of choice for others and his Shire was pleased to host caravanners through commercial camping. Barry’s position was resolute in support to existing commercial models of private enterprise over provision of low-cost public accommodation models:

I am anxious to help those people who come into our community who do that form of travel. But, at the end of the day, whatever costs they generate [costs for Council] through the maintenance of parks or the cleaning of the toilets, someone has to pay and I think there are those [caravan park operators] who develop facilities for that purpose, reasonable cost facilities they are. I am a supporter [of caravanning] but it is more of a rarity [in this community] they are freedom travellers.

However, Barry also advised there was a low level of condolence on the activity of freedom camping within the Shire, and around Boonah in particular. He cautioned though, if it were occurring, and reoccurring, with the same campers for consecutive nights Council would be wondering where they were doing their washing and where they were dumping their waste. He did acknowledge ‘if there was a complaint obviously we would investigate, but we are not looking for those who are doing it [freedom camping]’. Also, Barry’s council was mindful it was costing the ratepayers for freedom campers to be there – often without there always being a revenue return side of the equation for council. Barry relates freedom camping to going into a national park where it’s all free:

Well someone has to maintain that national park and the access and all the parking area. It’s ok if the RVs pull up in the Shire during the day, the shops are open. The opportunity is there to leave a dollar behind. But night-time camping, then there is little opportunity, the food facilities are closed. It is not always an equal proportion of cost and revenue that is borne by the community where they camp. If there was a dollar in and a dollar out, fine, but it is not always the case.

To demonstrate his principled point of user pays and his preferences for regulation abiding behaviours Barry made further analogies between road-side car-camping and road-side airport pick-up parking. ‘If you park on the side of the road and you are camping in the vehicle the police
should move you on’. Citing the Brisbane airport, ‘parking is not allowed on the side of the road’ while waiting to pick-up passengers. The central issues for Barry were about what is acceptable to his local community. He was sceptical about the level of need for freedom camping. He did acknowledge but preferred to dismiss peoples’ preferences for freedom of camping choice as an argument:

I understand the necessity [for road-side camping] if there was no commercial facility. Obviously it would then be very hard to preclude someone from staying in your community if they’re in genuine need but here in Boonah we have facilities.

For Barry, the viability of local businesses and compliance to existing regulatory standards comes first. ‘We do have standards nowadays’. He emphasises when someone builds a home it has to follow building standards which are there to ensure the safety of the occupants:

It’s why they pay their rates and taxes to ensure the water comes past their door or there is a proper system to dispose of their waste. I am not too sure the discharge of waste at a freedom camp is necessarily done in an appropriate way. So we need some civil process for it. When we do have increased levels of freedom camping, complaints come from people running the commercial parks.

Barry was quick to defend the rights of local caravan parks to make a “fair” living (see Chapter 1 - Introduction). He commended the parks and their industry associations for raising standards of amenity in caravan parks. He acknowledged operators are required to comply with strict compliance measures to ensure the safety of consumers. ‘My council is the regulator of those standards here in Scenic Rim so we need to play by our own rules’. To keep commercial accommodation viable Barry was convinced Council will need to move towards a zero opportunity of camping on the side of the road. He accepted the demand/supply dichotomy (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a) but believed Council’s role was to assist local caravan parks to remain viable first.

While there is a low level of freedom camping activity in Boonah now, Barry was adamant, ‘we make it fairly obvious they are not welcome if they are seen to loiter too long outside of commercial establishments’.

Barry’s politically conservative view was that the success of his community was driven by the success of the commercial operations existing within it. He and his council consistently showed support to the existing operations within existing legislative, business, and social frameworks – holding on to the status quo. Recreational vehicle campers were very welcome in the Scenic Rim as long as they played the traditional game, played by the traditional rules and made full use of traditional commercial camping facilities; those conforming to the rule of the day. Although not
currently operating within an environment of zero-tolerance to freedom camping, Barry was advocating it was the way of the future for his Council.

### 5.5.3 Scenic Rim Regional Council (Qld) operations-level perspective

Roger (LG, operations) for Scenic Rim Regional Council qualified there were multiple camping venues in the region operating on many different land tenures and under different instruments of legislative control. He recalled half a dozen commercial caravan parks, some of those being multi-purpose, for example Mount Barney Lodge, ‘um they have cabins, houses, and camping but they’re also um, RV Friendly but they’re a commercial site’. Most of the larger towns in the Scenic Rim have commercial sites but Roger differentiated them saying, ‘we have um, showgrounds or quasi-showgrounds in a number of the smaller locations available for low-cost camping’. He describes these as generally of a lesser quality facility to the commercial sites and with a commensurate lesser site cost. Additionally, he named two freedom sites; Bicentennial Park beside the visitor information centre in Boonah and Fassifern’s Memorial Reserve along the Cunningham Highway (see Table 21 – this Chapter). While he believed both were designated overnight stopping venues offering free accommodation Roger was uncertain as to the tenure and ‘thus cautious to protect his Council’s interests:

> We don’t have a written policy on um freedom camping, or anything associated with that for the Scenic Rim Regional Council so what I’m giving you is not the Scenic Rim Regional Council’s policy. But it is my understanding of the Scenic Rim’s position.

Roger observed there was a percentage of people with ‘self-contained vehicles carrying all the facilities they needed’ who believe their self-containment precluded them from needing to pay for a campsite. ‘In my opinion that is where the concept, the notion of freedom camping, is coming from’. They don’t believe they have to pay twice because they’ve got everything they need within their vans. Accepting some validity to that notion, Roger also cautioned in regard to the impact of freedom camping with ‘changing times and those changing technologies’. While in past times (see Chapter 4 – The enabling period) it was acceptable to throw down the swag under a tree, or along the side of a road ‘you know, there was very minimal impact’ but now ‘when you’ve got two hundred RVs in the one place, some with generators running um, you can’t say there is a minimal impact in the same comparison to the “swaggie” days’. Roger was not despising the freedom camping phenomenon, but reasonably reinforcing the times have changed and people’s travel habits and patterns have changed so councils also need to adapt to the “emerging markets”.

In the absence of any formal policy, Roger maintained the Council had sufficient other mechanisms for managing the freedom camping situation, inclusive of and demonstrated by perhaps the most
extensive network of camping options among the four case study councils. ‘We’ve also provided more information on our website about the facilities available’. Notwithstanding the Council’s lack of policy, Roger observed, while the commercial operators of the Scenic Rim have identified the “new” market forming they haven’t yet identified what they can do within their own business to attract that market. He expressed interest and concern over the caravan park industry across the board not moving fast enough to adapt with the times. The slowness within the park’s sector to innovate was also noted by Brooker (2012), who also found the parks sector was clinging desperately to old platforms of business operations and not responding well to the disruption through innovation. Roger lamented:

I’m not seeing innovation from the industry within the Scenic Rim but that’s not exclusive to the caravan park industry. The tourism industry over the last twenty, thirty years has changed cos people used to taking two weeks holiday at the end of each year and they go and stay in one place. That was the annual family holiday. The trends have changed and the short breaks are more prominent now than an annual two week holiday. So, other sectors of the tourism industry have had to change to accommodate that. Again, with the caravan industry in the Scenic Rim I’m not seeing they’re up to speed with the changes affecting their industry now and projections for it into the future. I don’t believe they’re up to speed.

In justification, Roger quoted from what he remembered to be a Tourism Queensland report; Not over the hill, just enjoying the view⁹, suggesting it was probably a very early look at the baby-boomer market. How might it look and thus what trends were going to follow for the future of tourism, particularly grey nomad tourism. He indicated grey nomad tourism was an interesting part of the overall market, but through the research his Council had commissioned (see Dredge et al. 2011), they were not currently viewed as major players despite some being permanently on the road. Roger considered grey nomads were often ‘just looking for a quick place to pull up overnight’.

He was concerned his commercial operators had not taken stronger moves to attract this transient market, to modify their park zones to offer choice to travellers. Choice in service level, choice in facility level and choice in pricing levels. He was advocating for parks to be split; ‘two or more sections’. One section has something for those who are after the traditional hooked-up services, those that have been the domain of caravan parks and meeting the consumer demand up to this point. But for the “other”, hooked-up facilities are not what this freedom market is demanding:

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⁹ This report was in fact prepared by Colik et al. (1999) and provides a close up look at the seniors market for tourism in Australia. It summarises extensive seniors market research with findings presented as practical strategies and ideas to help commercial operators motivate and attract senior travellers.
... it’s not what they want, ‘they’re not going to go there and they’re not going to pay the money. So, you know I think, the idea or concept of drawing a line down the middle [of caravan parks] and having that side with, and that side without, which means the “withouts” don’t get access to a lot of stuff but that might be something worth pursuing for the caravan parks.

Roger was foreshadowing his council’s need to develop a policy for freedom camping if the market continued to grow. If it becomes of greater interest to this community, ‘we have got to change - then we’ve got to develop policies’. When it is taken seriously at council policy-level then the operations-level also have to take it seriously. Roger recalled examples where councils in other parts of Queensland had taken a policy decision to endorse freedom camping which caused tensions among the neighbouring shires:

Um, it has caused confrontations, it’s caused tensions within regions. I guess it is something that needs to be done to give some direction for those areas receiving higher visitation. For Scenic Rim, not so much at this time. But if we wanted to attract more [freedom camping] visitors we might go down a path of providing more facilities.

In contrast, he shared an anecdote of collaborative approaches to solution emergence rather than just more tension building. This was through an advisory panel he participated on during the Queensland Government’s review of camping options and the formulation of the Camping Options Toolkit (DTESB 2014d):

Look, I think, to be honest with you we were all sitting there and we were all of the view there are divided “camps” around the table. But I think there was also a will to have a solution, to have an outcome. I’ll be interested to see if everybody accepts the outcome whenever it’s delivered10. I think that’s going be the litmus test for the future.

In consideration to the future, Roger returned to his earlier concept of enabling commercial caravan parks to provide facilities at different levels, with different compliance constraints and costs at different price points within the same park. He foresees a need for active lobbying of state government by CQ in support to amendments of the local government planning scheme. This would allow local governments of the future to assess caravan park and camping ground DAs in a different way. The current compliance costs for private enterprise wishing to pursue the freedom camping market are too high and thus cost prohibitive, ‘you know, their fees and charges are horrific, the sewerage charges alone’. Roger believed Council’s planning scheme needed to recognise different levels of service provision within camping grounds allowing different zones

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10 The Queensland Camping Options Toolkit was ‘delivered’ and launched by the Minister for Tourism, Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games in March 2014.
assessed at different compliance levels. Zone one is a low-cost camping option for self-contained RVs; Zone two is standard caravan park style camping with access to hooked-up services; Zone three is for the non-tow market including cabins; and, Zone four is for permanent residents and relocatable homes. Roger’s rationale for zoning was each has different income generating capacity and thus the fees and charges applicable to each should be equitably based on that capacity. Currently it’s a one size fits all approach in Scenic Rim, ‘so there’s no flexibility’ and ‘this makes commercial accommodation of low-cost camping sustainably prohibitive’.

Roger concluded, ‘I think that is something Council could do. We can talk around it all day but it’s got to be a marriage’ sharing a view that all stakeholders must be in the circle and ‘must be keen to have mutual solutions for any change process to be effective for the future’. By way of example, Roger spoke to such a private public partnership between a local council and a commercial park operator in Western Australia. This collaboration is giving the region’s tourism industry a boost. The City of Karratha is working with Discovery Parks, a private operator, to separate zoning within their park assisting the town to achieve RV Friendly status. Karratha Council has agreed to support the zone splitting initiative by contributing to a dividing fence and providing additional curb-side signage for the “new” low-cost but exceptionally noted “private” camping area (Allingham 2016).

5.5.4 State association perspective (Qld) - Caravanning Queensland

Patricia (state, operations) for Caravanning Queensland (CQ) agreed with Roger and Barry of the Scenic Rim in respect to protecting the interests of the commercial caravan parks before pursuing freedom camping opportunities. She advised CQ was a member based state caravan and camping industry association advocating for the commercial caravan parks in Queensland. Patricia was very aware of the freedom camping lobby activities and the pressure this was placing on local governments throughout the state. Rather than using the freedom terminology to contrast with commercial camping, Patricia preferred to make distinctions between ‘compliant’ and ‘non-compliant’ camping. The significance of terminology from her Association’s perspective was in placing emphasis on local and state regulations, such as those relating to building codes, safety and the environment rather than distinguishing between camping venues based on tariff alone. Patricia did acknowledge there is confusion around terminology and the perception that the industry associations in general have a problem with freedom camping ‘and that’s absolutely not

11 Statutory requirements for caravan parks in NSW to hold and register short-term zoned sites in greater proportion to long-term zoned sites was abolished in 1998 (see Chapter 3 - The constraining period)
Chapter 5: Local government engagement

the case’. Rather, CQ had a problem with unregulated (non-compliant) camping provided by councils in an area of close vicinity (i.e. within an exclusion zone) to a commercial (regulated) caravan park:

We have absolutely no objection to freedom camping if it is in the middle of nowhere, where someone’s gone down by a creek. There’s nothing around, you know, they’re experiencing our country. They’re getting out there. They’re getting down and dirty and they’re experiencing what we have on offer. You know that’s absolutely beautiful. That’s our industry. We love that. We fully support that.

However, as noted by the mayor of Scenic Rim Regional Council, remote area freedom camping, by default, reduces capacity of campers to engage with local retail spending and consequently economic contribution to local communities. CQ’s concern though, their problem, is with councils supplying CBD freedom camping places but not abiding by the rules they apply when regulating caravan parks:

Enforcing all the local laws and having campers pay fees and charges; obtaining licences and permits; ensuring compliance through state legislation; and then, opening up a block of dirt opposite [for freedom camping] and applying no regulation to themselves.

Patricia believed this was opening up risk to the environment, risk to the public, and also risk to the consumer:

The caravan parks are regulated so heavily to protect all those three things and the block of dirt is just laid out there. Anything could happen to people who are caravanning there. It’s frightening the risk councils put on consumers and also on their local region.

The regulatory burden placed upon a commercial caravan park operator and then the disregard by some councils to those regulations put in place for consumer and environmental protection was of serious concern to CQ:

We would not have issues if council opened up a block of dirt after it went through, if it required, the material ‘Change of Use’ on that land and applied for ‘Secondary Use’ under their local laws and the relevant state legislation. If they then opened a caravan park and charged not a cent we would not have a problem because at the end of the day we know the environment is being looked after. We know the consumer who’s going to that camping ground is protected and we know the public is protected because of the safe guards in place. That’s really it in a nut shell. Compliant freedom camping – not a problem.

Non-compliant camping she explained was camping provided by Council without adherence to state regulations, particularly the Secondary Use of Crown Trust Lands policy. Just because a venue doesn’t charge a camping fee does not automatically make it non-compliant camping. Patricia advised CQ were conscious of the need for constant improvement of member park product and if
they came across a park at any stage lacking in level of regulatory standard they would work with the operator, public or private, trying to support them, giving them tools in what they need to take that step to better their product compliance:

So it’s like any industry, we’re always improving our product. We’re always looking for the future and the compliancy burden of it. When camping places are developed, they must adhere to what was a regulatory requirement at that stage and any future development inherit whatever council requires them to adhere to. If there’s anything in addition to that, then council must be enforcing it.

Patricia explained how valuable caravan parks were to local communities (see BDO 2013; BDO 2014; CCIA-Tweed Region 2015) and ‘that just doesn’t seem to be acknowledged at all by some councils’. She reasoned councils are being fed so much misinformation, and being lobbied so hard by the CMCA (Figure 24), they just get confused in knowing what they should be doing with freedom camping. In turn they offer an area of land for freedom camping not realising how they will be affecting the commercial caravan park and its business; how their council decision was affecting local tourism:

So it’s just a massive muddle of mess and I don’t envy the councillors who are faced with these decisions. There’s a lot of confusion, you know, they receive constant beatings and threats their town is going to be boycotted when they don’t, you know, adhere to the wants and needs of, no let’s call it the wants, it’s nothing to do with needs, it’s the wants of these [freedom camping] consumers.

Caravanning Queensland, was steadfast in defending the non-sympathetic position on freedom camping held by the Scenic Rim Regional Council. CQ was, in this circumstance, an outstanding advocate for the dissenting voice of caravan and camping associations across Australia towards any non-compliant provision of freedom camping, particularly by local councils.

Figure 24 - CMCA’s lobby machine visiting local councils and attending Rallies.
Photo credit: Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia
5.6 Case study four: Diamantina Shire Council (Qld)

5.6.1 Diamantina Shire Council (Qld) profile

Diamantina Shire of western Queensland has a population of only 300 though it is the largest of the cases at 95 000 sq kms (see Chapter 1 - Figure 2). Birdsville, with only 100 residents is an internationally recognised and iconic “outback” tourist town. At 1600 kilometres west of Brisbane (Qld), 1207 kilometres north of Adelaide (SA) and 862 kilometres east of Alice Springs (NT) Birdsville is a genuine “outpost” on the eastern edge of the Simpson Desert. During the annual September picnic horse races the population swells to over 10 000. With only one motel and one caravan park in town the major overflow accommodation is through freedom camping on the Town Common. This Crown reserve beside the Diamantina River separates the town and the racecourse (see Table 22 - this Chapter).

Birdsville is an essential service hub to the desert tourist traffic. The key tourism feature is the access itself – the sojourn to Birdsville. Regardless of direction of approach, the journey to Birdsville is celebrated for its ruggedness and is a test of endurance for many visiting RVers and their RVs. From the south, the 517 kilometre Birdsville Track from Maree, the closest town, terminates at the Birdsville Hotel. Incoming westward traffic from Alice Springs (four wheel drive only) cross Aboriginal reserves and the Simpson Desert National Park via Frenches Line. These unformed sand tracks, are remnant seismic lines and legacy to mid-20th Century oil exploration. Combined, they have become a desert highway of international renown. On the desert crossing, Big Red as the highest and last of 1100+ sand dunes for incoming traffic is a daunting though welcoming signpost just 35 kilometres from the Pub at Birdsville.

Winter tourism, between March and November, is a major seasonal factor for the Diamantina economy providing 17.0% of local FTE jobs and contributing 6.5% of GRP for the Shire in 2013/14 (see Table 22). However, cattle breeding is the long-haul mainstay for the Shire generating 42.3% FTE positions and contributing 44.4% to GRP (Lawrence Consulting 2015). Although heavily outweighed by agriculture, tourism is important to Birdsville’s two sector economy. The following sections further explain the politics of freedom camping policy in the context of Diamantina Shire generally and through the perspectives of the informants operating in the political sphere of Birdsville specifically.
### Table 22 - Diamantina Shire community profile and Birdsville freedom camping profile

Source: Author

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<th>Shire area Sq. Km</th>
<th>Total pop</th>
<th>State Capital Other (SA)</th>
<th>Birdsville How do RVers get there</th>
<th>Birdsville Why do RVers go there</th>
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<td>95 000 Sq. Km</td>
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<td>Adelaide 1207 km</td>
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<th>Main centres</th>
<th>Pop. 2013/14</th>
<th>Major industries Source: (Lawrence Consulting)</th>
<th>2013/14 FTE (%)</th>
<th>2013/14 GRP (%)</th>
<th>Major access</th>
<th>Major attractions</th>
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<td>Birdsville</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Acom / F&amp;B</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>Birdsville Dev Road</td>
<td>Birdsville Races</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedourie</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Birdsville Track</td>
<td>Birdsville Track</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betoota (Ghost town)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>Frenches Line</td>
<td>Birdsville Pub</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Eyre Dev Road</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>Birdsville Track</td>
<td>Big Red</td>
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<tr>
<th>Freedom camping areas (Low or no cost sites)</th>
<th>Formal (Approved by a recognised authority for camping at this site)</th>
<th>Informal (Non-approved but a recognised &amp; tolerated practice at this site)</th>
<th>Illegal (Camping occurs in defiance of an authority’s signposts)</th>
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<td>Town Common (CT)</td>
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<td>Birdsville Track (CT)</td>
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<td>Simpson Desert (PP/NPWS)</td>
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<th>Commercial camping areas (Licenced caravan parks)</th>
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<td>Birdsville Caravan Park</td>
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(DTMR) Department of Transport & Roads; NPWS: National Parks & Wildlife Services; (PP) Private Property; (CT) Crown Trust
5.6.2 Diamantina Shire Council (Qld) policy-level perspective

Well I, I don’t freedom camp. No, no way in the world, I camp for a living so I refuse to camp when I’m having fun. So when I go [on holiday], I like to go with a few Stars [Accommodation Rating Stars] under my belt (Malcolm, LG, policy).

Malcolm, as mayor of Diamantina Shire, presided over a destination of revered beauty beyond the desert sands, not least for its clear wide night skies. Malcolm was adamant though in respect to his own recreation any reference to stars was going to be all about quality and comfort, or AAA Star Ratings, and not about quantity and brightness of constellations in the dark desert skies. Malcolm’s inference to camping for a living and the alternate, “star quality accommodation”, continued throughout his dialogue about freedom camping. As owner of a cattle station, he was in fact very accustomed to camping. However, through necessity and not pleasure, as he camped in remote outposts on his own station while tending to his stock and the array of other station management duties:

Ah mate, I’m from the bush. I’d rather, when I go somewhere, I’d rather camp in something nice you know. We, obviously out here, we do a bit of freedom camping on the run because there’s no other accommodation, not because we can’t afford something else.

Malcolm’s views on affluence and the way wealth enabled different camping segments to present differently within his Shire were in contrast to Robert’s (LG, policy) experiences with “shoe-string” (Cohen 2011; Cohen 2015) vanpacking freedom campers on the Byron coast; at least those showing deliberate preferences for budget travel. Malcolm rather, suggested the freedom camper he engages is an affluent person:

The general freedom camper I see has a fair bit of money and a fair time and they can stay longer out of town. I know that’s a big problem for the town. In so far as they come and they use the facilities or use the town for next to nothing and don’t inject any capital into the town. They seem to have a “take” attitude.

Malcolm was indicating the ‘bit better equipped campers with bigger RVs can carry more supplies’. He quotes some of the fuel providers saying ‘oh they camp down the river. They stay there. They’ve got plenty of fuel to be able to get in and out without having to fuel up or buy groceries’. In contrast, he profiles rough campers, the “other” ones, as having a “give” attitude. With only the basic camping equipment or the smaller caravan they will use the commercial caravan park in town because they don’t have all the flash in-built on-board facilities for cooking and ablutions:

The rougher camper who will camp in the caravan park, or even occasionally down the creek, he’s quite prepared to come into town because he camps a bit rough, he’s quite
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Malcolm was distinguishing between groups of campers – those making more economic contribution to the Birdsville community and those making less contribution – by the class of their vehicles (see Chapter 2 – Trip style and Vehicle selection). He asserted those with the greatest wealth, or largest rigs, equate to those of least contribution:

You only have a look at, at the river there. Look at those RVs, they’re all magic bloody shows. The bloke in the tent he’s using the caravan park! ...and that’s why, that’s my observation of freedom campers. They seem to be only the affluent and it’s growing every year because the roads are getting better and they’re bringing more affluent tourists. It’s something that’s increasing continually.

Malcolm was adamant in his distinction between campers. Those he observed to be much more self-sufficient, with bigger more robust rigs, and those less self-sufficient. The latter requiring the use of static hooked-up infrastructure and the general services of both the caravan park and the other businesses in the town. Using Malcolm’s peer identification scheme (see Chapter 2 - Pre-trip determiners) to monitor net-benefit to his community, luxury campers in the big rigs were “takers” and rough campers in the small rigs were “givers”. This demarcation between “takers” and “givers”, was similar to the accommodation “payers” and the “non-payers”, Maurice, (LG, policy) spoke of in Walgett Shire. Maurice’s reference was pertaining more to his Council’s costs for maintaining the camping venues attractive to freedom campers. Malcolm, on the other hand, was making stronger reference to the cash injection, or not, from the campers towards the commercial business operators of Birdsville. Both types of camper were evident, and prevalent, in Malcolm’s Birdsville community during my own field engagement.

On another civic angle, that of public infrastructure development, through his independent observation Malcolm was in accord with Maurice, his NSW mayoral counterpart from Walgett Shire. Malcolm’s observation was relative to associated public infrastructure improvements, namely the health clinic, water and sewer, the airport and the road network. Such infrastructure improvements were making it easier for campers of all descriptions, including those that fly in to camp\textsuperscript{12}, to access and remain in Birdsville, leaving their cash behind. Malcolm remained hopeful, government willing, his council will be able to keep improving the infrastructure, particularly the roads:

\textsuperscript{12} Under-wing camping is permitted within the aerodrome precincts of Diamantina Shire
When eventually we do have it all sealed [from the coast] we will get a different sort of tourist then, different altogether. We’ll have the ones turning up here, in you know, their BMWs.

Malcolm admits his net community benefit theory (takers and givers) may well be further tested in the future as he observes, ‘yes, we definitely see many more of them freedom ones these days’. Whether they stay down by the river or up in the caravan park, Malcolm was confident his council and the Birdsville community would gladly accommodate them all (Figure 25). His liberal perspective to welcoming visitors and making innovative provision for them regardless of their level of affluence was supported by other informants in Birdsville. The following section takes its direction from Brian’s story. Brian was a keen observer of economic and social developments across the Diamantina being a recent LG transferee from a NSW council. His story is punctuated with perspectives of other community and business informants.

5.6.3 Diamantina Shire Council (Qld) operations-level perspective

Brian (LG, operations) for Diamantina Shire was very familiar with the freedom camping debate and particularly with tourism policy and politics having the bureaucratic experience in local government across two states and one territory. However, even with experience Brian was less sure why some towns, and more so, some states were grappling with the freedom camping phenomenon and other were not, ‘I don’t know why, but there appears to be less of a problem in Qld than there is in NSW’. Indirectly Brian was suggesting the political ideologies of the two states was different.

Brian repeatedly referred to the proactive and integrated ‘whole-of-government’ liberal approach Queensland had taken to tourism planning and especially policy development for freedom camping just in recent months. In contrast, his perception was to a lack of a strategic direction from the more conservative New South Wales Government and then further only scant inter-agency cooperation to which he was more accustomed. He qualified this by introducing processes from the 2013 Destination Q (Queensland) forum. The newly elected Liberal National Party premier, The Hon Campbell Newman, was demanding higher levels of cooperative planning from his ministers. Subsequently all relevant ministers were summoned to Destination Q and planning documents, such as the Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy, were reborn (see Chapter 3 – Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-2020). Premier Newman set very short time lines for delivery of outputs enabling timely responses to rapidly changing tourism consumer demands in Queensland. The premier was keen to close the apparent gaps in accommodation supply, including freedom camping places. Through this integrated planning approach the many
Figure 25 - RVers (takers and givers) enjoy Birdsville’s welcoming hospitality
Source: Author
agencies responsible for multi-layered aspects of tourism facilitation (transport and main roads, national parks, tourism, and planning) along with their respective ministers plus the attorney general and the premier himself, were all actively involved. ‘By actively involved, I mean actually sitting at the workshop at this forum [Destination Q] and saying – “yes we will commit to that”’ (Brian, LG, operations).

Brian’s excitement over this level of state commitment to tourism was evident. His main point was to emphasise ‘sometimes we\(^\text{13}\) put the cart before the horse’. He was suggesting sometimes, in the case of the freedom camping phenomenon, tourism planners, promoters and marketers simply get overtaken by the wave of opportunity. They get entangled in the economic development opportunities and embark on marketing campaigns to ignite the freedom camping fire, to encourage the freedom campers without actually having laid the path first. Sometimes they get caught up in the smoke of the campfire without considering who is going to sustainably produce the wood:

> We need not necessarily be promoting to them first, we need to be ready, legislatively, infrastructurally and socially, before promotion. And that is why it was one of the first things the premier and the state government progressed.

Direct outputs from Destination Q specifically relative to freedom camping in Queensland were confidently relayed by Brian:

> When you see the outputs in there [Queensland’s Drive Tourism Strategy] there are some things we would not expect to see. It is really showing in term of the national parks, in term of the communication, really a lot of stuff in there they have nailed by realising many places don’t have fixed camping areas but they still receive and desire more RV tourists.

Brian was keen to demonstrate his point further. He explained not everybody that camps in a national park, ‘even those parks, such as the Simpson Desert, with designated camping areas’, necessarily camp in the fixed areas. Instead, they prefer the wilderness experience, camping out between the dunes in isolation. However, independent and self-sufficient camping away from the crowds, away from the provided infrastructure, can trigger new layers of conflict – that among different land tenure managers. This is highlighted further by Bronwyn (community, business):

> We would rather them be there [in the designated camping areas] than just willy-nilly all over the place but in the end they don’t want to be too close to “others” or that

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\(^{13}\) Brian’s reference to “we” is a collective we of all of his current and past local government destination planning colleagues.
structured setup. They want to be 100 yards away, or over the next dune and way from
group camping.

Brian suggests the assumption therefore, held by many people that freedom campers are
restricted to people in a Winnebago or a caravan staying in national parks or state forests or just
pulling over on the immediate side of a national highway is not necessarily the case. In Diamantina
Shire, particularly anyone going down the Birdsville Track, if they want to stop anywhere on the
first 300 kilometres they will be freedom camping and more than likely, on private property.
Likewise anybody in the desert, whether they are crossing the Simpson or not, is freedom
camping. People assume the road (or track) is on national park or local council owned land even
though it is mostly on private pastoral land:

They camp up, along the roads and at Big Red. They can’t fathom why there is no
camping at Big Red. We are constantly chasing people off that private property. Likewise,
anywhere along the Birdsville Track. People assume they can drive in a kilometre or so
of the road and camp. They shouldn’t, it is all private land (Brian, LG, operations).

This infringement onto private property does pose somewhat of an issue for the land owners who
are actually trying to earn their income from cattle production, not tourism. While Bruce
(Community, business) acknowledged that there was opportunity to supplement his agriculture-
based income from active engagement with tourism, he explained it was not currently sufficiently
viable, and somewhat incompatible, with his core business of beef production. ‘I mean, we are
running a business here. A cattle property is a factory – it’s a meat production factory’ (Bruce,
community, business). Bronwyn (community, business) added:

Big Red is a place people go and visit and it is on our property. I don’t think people are
aware it’s on private property. I think there’s also a perception of ‘we can just go and
camp there’. So from our point of view that’s an issue we have to constantly deal with.

Campers assume if the road is not fenced and there is no private property sign, they can do what
they want. Brian doesn’t blame the camper. He doesn’t see it as their fault. Instead he is critical
of himself, his council, and every other council with similar problems. He suggested it is simply a
case of inadequate nationally-based integrated guidelines:

It is a lack of education, it is a lack of clear instructions for what they can and can’t do.
That is where, again, it is critical for myself and my council, and every other council, to
catch up quickly. We have been caught on the hop because the freedom camping market
is growing so rapidly (Brian, LG, and operations).

However, Bronwyn (Community, business) was more philosophical about the growth reflecting ‘…
historically though, out here, people often couldn’t get to a town in one day, in the old cars. So
they used to camp and that’s just the evolution, the tradition, the Australian tradition – you pull
up and you camp at the stock route reserve’. But Bruce (community, business) showed a little more concern returning to his meat production analogy and the organic certification over his property. ‘It is important people don’t come and bring chemicals or do something to the water in the stock tanks’. At the same time he showed genuine concern for the safety of visitors while on his property:

It [the property] hasn’t got walls around it but there has to be, there is Workplace Health & Safety rules to consider. So just as in any production area, you need to know who’s there at any one time to give them a bit of advice. Where there is a public road, access road going through it, it’s somewhat acceptable if they, you know, want to stop and camp nearby. It’s reasonable.

Bruce continues, ‘… if you’ve been driving across the desert and you want to pull up somewhere, you can pull up’. However, he also expressed concern ‘some campers take it to the nth degree, wandering off four or five kilometres inside the property. They think they can camp wherever they like and nobody can stop them’. The campers like to swim in the stock watering tanks and artesian bore drains to cool off or even have their bush bath; sometimes polluting the water.

Hence, the rapid growth and indiscriminate property infringements are presenting as additional challenges for Diamantina Shire to manage. More and more RVs means more and more freedom campers straying further and further onto private property. Sometimes this happens in naivety and sometimes in direct defiance of property owners’ rights and signage. Operationally, Brian believes councils need to be active in these circumstance as he observes some glaring problems regarding public liability. He warns of ‘the ramifications of someone getting hurt or even if some idiot just runs amuck, ruining it for the rest’ (DNRM 2014; Francis 2014; Patterson 2014; Rooth 2015). Brian was reinforcing his cart before the horse analogy for tourism planning in general, but freedom camping in particular, by suggesting councils have underprepared or have set up the problems themselves:

We are promising experiences [through marketing materials], selling an expectation to visitors and this is driving a spike in demand. We project images of freedom camping or being able to go out there and camp on the side of a river or on the side of a road. However there is no consistent, I suppose, product or delivery or map or brochure or set of rules of where freedom camping is allowed.

He qualified care was required with his shotgun criticisms and conceded there are some councils with maps and guidelines and policies on where you can and can’t camp but he reinforced the lack of legislative consistency across councils and further, across states. He described it as very poor early stages of product development:
So I suppose what we have done is put the cart before the horse. We have driven a demand but we haven’t actually set up the legal framework to deliver the product.

Speaking generically, Brian was inferring some councils were more advanced than others in their preparations, planning and policies for freedom camping. However, he emphasised state government really should be the driver supporting individual councils, similar to the New Zealand model (see New Zealand Parliament 2011), advocating the need to actually provide a minimum level of service to accommodate the influx from the freedom camping phenomenon. Brian was keen to see the days of debate over legality, protectionism, level playing fields, economic contribution, freeloaders, freedom of choice, and national competition policy behind him. Instead, he preferred more value was placed on the economic and social importance of caravan and camping, inclusive of freedom camping, to national, state and regional economies, and specifically to local communities (CIAA 2015b). Brian was advocating for every council to have an accommodating strategy for campers of all persuasions, commercial and non-commercial:

Now some councils do have strategies and certain areas there for freedom camping but they are at a very developmental stage. No, it is not done well enough and is certainly not adequate enough to cope with the demand. There is still a lot of work to be done, in product development integrated at state level, regional level and council level, in preparing for these guys and not chasing them away or trying to herd them against their will.

In using the term “herd” Brian was again referencing back to the travelling stock routes. He was principally critical of governments’ slow response to the freedom camping phenomenon. Most disturbing to him was the lack of a policy responses to the widening imbalances between supply and demand. Why had it been left unchecked in the wake of changing tourism patterns and new technologies? Why had freedom camping not effectively made it onto the wider political agenda?

People want experiences. They don’t want a package holiday. People want something different and they want to be seen to break the mould. Those coming in a caravan don’t necessarily want to go to a nice clean caravan park any more or at least all the time. They have the technology in their RVs to be independent.

He spread open Diamantina Shire’s glossy A4 tourism guide to illustrate his point. He showed how none of their marketing and advertising materials portray people sitting in a caravan park next to a toilet block or a shower block or a swimming pool. ‘We never show people sitting on a concrete pad with a power cable hooked in to their RV. Instead, we show them parked there on the edge of the river with an easy chair looking over the water’. Brian admitted to some extent the industry, the government industry, his industry, had encouraged this type of camping. Tourism managers, or destination marketing managers ‘are encouraging people to freedom camp but actually we
Brian was intimating councils, as an instrument of government and through their regional promotional campaigns have also caused the freedom camping industry to grow. ‘We have given forth a perception campers can go out there, in the bush, in a fully self-sufficient RV and not stay in a caravan park’. He also acknowledged there is competition, conflict in a sense, within the broader parameters of the same generic industry; between supply of mobile RV product and supply of static RV sites:

There is a gap, I suppose that is the word. The RVs are all geared up for freedom camping but we don’t have the ground product ready for them yet and we really need to work actively to actually get that in place. By that I mean not just every council doing a little map but having some consistent products, consistent policies, and consistent guidelines that uniformly translate across council and state borders. Tourists don’t look at lines on the map. They don’t want to go to 20 councils to collect the council brochures, drive tourism strategies from TQ, Destination NSW or every single state for that matter.

Brian was also able to offer several paths of endeavour in closing the gap at the operational level, with signage, brochures, web apps and maps, but the bottom line for him was integrated local, regional, state and federal government intervention:

Given the number of people [freedom campers] coming through, the National Tourism Signage Reference Group [NTSRG] should be dictating to the states, demanding of the RTOs [Regional Tourism Organisation] they have clear [reference] points, so when you come into an area you can actually download an app, or purchase, or receive a map with a set of consistent rules on how to behave and where all of the freedom camping areas are in the state, or even Australia-wide, and we don’t have that.

Brian was fully aware of the challenges in providing this very broad service, and particularly the present encumbrance on local government to achieve that alone. But to have such integration as a bare minimum, he claims, supported by other infrastructures such as signage, permits, and policy guidelines was imperative to dealing nationally with the freedom camping phenomenon. He was keen to see a halt to the debates, ‘to deal with them just takes up my time’. His message was threefold: first, the councils do need to make provisions for all tourists, including freedom campers; second, national guidelines, similar to the “swim between the flags” beach safety messages, be developed to support people in their chosen freedom camping travel style; and third, strategic policy direction for freedom camping is uniformly legislated through the various states. They in turn support their regions who support local governments. Citing how it could work, Brian raised again the example of the Freedom Camping Act 2011 in New Zealand. He did add a
cautionary acknowledgement regarding the more complicated three-layered (national, state and local) system of government in Australia compared to the two layered (national and local) parliamentary systems of New Zealand.

Brian was suggestive there needs to be some legislative direction coming forth with influence from the state government believing it to be a state government issue at the very least. He did not believe it was councils’ issue alone, ‘we can’t solve this ourselves’ echoing the perspective of John (LG, operations) from Byron Shire. In essence, they were each emphasising need for certainty, certainly as a state-wide initiative, but more so they were hopeful for an umbrella national initiative to develop consistent definitions, language, and guidelines to support state-based legislation that flowed across council borders. This would make the travel experience seamless for visitors and provide foundational indemnity for landholders and councils currently vexed by power struggles and land tenure conflicts. Each brings their own level of inherent risk to consumers, communities and councils. Brian suggested the ARTN, as a peak national tourism body, rather than an authoritative body, was best placed to push these essential matters of standards and risk up the national tourism policy agenda:

This is much, much bigger than any single state. This needs to come from the top and unfortunately, knowing the policy model for Tourism Australia, they are much more a marketing body than a development body. They don’t give a damn [about development matters] and they allow the states to take care of this development stuff so they [Tourism Australia] are not the appropriate body.

Rather, Brian was advocating for ARTN, from a policy advocacy perspective, and the NTSRG from a signage advocacy perspective to collectively look at how freedom camping is resolved at a national level. He was very firm in his desire for some national body to take charge and filter, from the suite of freedom camping initiatives, a problem-solutions package and escalate this package up the national policy ladder.

He gives an example where multi-state cooperation, and policy consistency, is required. While specifically relevant to Diamantina Shire in Queensland, the example could be transposed to many cross-border regions across Australia, including the Queensland/New South Wales situations earlier described between the region of the Gold Coast and Byron local government areas (see Chapter 3 – Local governments’ challenge). Birdsville is within a half day drive of five different states or territory jurisdictions, if you include the closed (access by permit only) Aboriginal lands:

So you have got Queensland, you have got NSW, South Australia and Northern Territory and the reality is, you get out there into the desert and you also have closed Aboriginal
lands. So we have got four or five corners [state corner markers], and each is an attraction in their own right. People flock there to take the selfie and mark the occasion of being in several states at once.

He specifically cites the example of visiting Popples Corner. If you camp on the Queensland side, literally lying and sleeping in your tent on the ground, or on the Toyota rooftop, that is fine. Just a metre away, on the South Australian side, you could be fined and penalised because you don’t have a Desert Pass. ‘That is a classic case of how stupid it is’.

In his resolve for a consistent approach, Brian lamented how ridiculous the current fragmentation is and just how confusing it is for the campers out there. He was insistent, as tourism, leisure and recreation planners, ‘we have got to stop behaving in our original blinkered local government boundary modes’ and only promoting experiences that stop at LG borders. Similarly with drive-tourism routes, ‘we are encouraging these visitors to follow these intra and interstate routes but we have different sets of rules and regulations along the way’. Bronwyn (community, business) reinforced:

In South Australia they have quite strict rules. If it’s a designated highway or road you can only camp within certain distance either side of it. Campers legally are not allowed to go any further than that. Here in Queensland, you know we have businesses in both states, the rules are completely different.

Brian’s thoughts as to why such discrepancies and other issues of freedom camping were not being taken more seriously, particularly at state and federal levels, stem from a “disconnection of stakeholders” (see Dredge & Jenkins 2011b) and the fundamental differences in their beliefs and values. In essence they are either willing to look towards a future through innovative and creative eyes or they are preferring to uphold the status quo, happy to use existing legislations to protect personal interests:

Everyone is trumpeting whether they want to encourage these people or not. The trumpeting is more about being argumentative, taking an either or approach, rather than proposing a solution to councils. You have got some councils more than others that have successfully converted themselves to the CMCA scheme, adopting RV Friendly Town protocols. But the downside is, because of the style of the CMCA’s approach, others have backed away and banned camping in their shires altogether.

What Brian was describing is mix-matched political ideologies displaying through personal and institutional values. Rather, there are camps, ‘and the first thing I see is we have camps on either side but no solutions’. He estimates the balance of RV Friendly towns sits at 50/50 among the councils because nobody is actually saying, ‘ok this is what we need to do’ and presenting a unified voice to the local government associations or the state governments to roll it out. Consequently,
independent local governments continue to tackle the problem piecemeal. Conceding CMCA have lobbied, somewhat successfully to encourage RV Friendly towns, Brian was concerned while they have converted individual councils, they have failed to unify states:

They have really brought it to the local agenda and really tackled it at that lower level but they haven’t successfully lobbied the state government or the federal government to come up with a common sense, common action, and common policy. Although not totally misguided, they have been operating on a one by one council base. I think they need to set their sights higher and when they do the other things will fall into place. The problem is lack of direction coming down the national planning and policy road.

The see-sawing conflict Brian observed emanating from the warring factions, he calls the ‘banging heads’ approach. Instead of pitting councils against neighbouring councils and industry association against consumer camping associations, he said ‘freedom camping needs to get on the agenda at a higher level’. Intimating both lobbies need to turn their attention to government organisations and agencies that can make a legislative difference – to move camping tourism forward in unity and not hold it back in the pre-technology, pre-platform age. Brian was advocating for the setting of a simple plan and then for all agencies working together to roll it out across the country. ‘The only way to fix it is for a national organisation to get it on the agenda simultaneously at the state and national levels’. He was unwavering in his believe and desire for somebody in a national organisation to take hold of freedom camping as a policy issue and push it forward to all state governments in unison because if it is not solved concurrently at the higher level, Brian believes, ‘we will be having this same conversation if five years-time’.

5.6.4 State agency perspective (Qld) - Department of Tourism, Events and Small Business

Thora (State, operations) as a representative of Queensland’s Department of Tourism Events and Small Business (DTESB) confirmed her government was serious about making tourism a pillar of growth and prosperity for the state and her Department was certainly taking freedom camping serious as ‘part of the tourism product, part of the tourism offering for the state’. She believed freedom camping was a valuable part of ‘the broader tourism mix, the accommodation mix, the experience mix and something tourism could leverage off’. Her Departmental colleague Brody (State, operations) explained:

What the Qld government are doing through the Drive Tourism Strategy is a best-practice set of guidelines on camping and caravanning; it covers the whole industry with all the ins and outs of where and how to camp with input from every single player we could find.
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Thora cautioned while her government had been using commercial and non-commercial as delineators for the mode of camping she knew there to be some conflicting dialogue over other terminology and definitions. Offering freedom, commercial, compliant, illegal, and non-compliant camping as alternatives she acknowledged the “freedom” term was gaining traction as consumers were pushing for “freedom of choice” in their camping practices and from what she understood they just wanted choice:

So I think they say for a part of the journey ‘we commercial camp’ but for another part of our journey ‘we just want to be free, out on our own exploring the open world and this great, big, beautiful country we live in’. I think it really comes down to personal points of view from my observation.

Brody confirmed when he spoke to the consumers he just got the same story over and over again and ‘it doesn’t take long and you just get the same story … you just got to find out what they want’.

Thora was observing people to say they were freedom camping because sometimes, ‘the caravan parks just aren’t catering for our needs’. Some campers told her they were totally self-contained and they just needed a parcel of land to drive their RV onto at the end of a day’s travel and set up camp for the night. ‘They have left home, left the neighbours and everything about home and just want to be out there experiencing nature’.

Brody picked up on the point that Brian (LG, operations) from Diamantina Shire first raised about state and federal engagement in the freedom camping policy arena, specifically Destination Queensland (Destination Q). Brody introduced the 2012 ‘change of government’ in Qld as the impetus for the heightened activity he (and I) had been observing across the previous 18 months:

Um, that’s Campbell Newman’s government. Ah, they’ve made tourism a pillar, as they say, and this drive topic has just been boiling among the Tourism Department and you, you Rod know those guys, all of them up there. They have known about this issue [freedom camping] but they have not had the capacity, or the budget, or the, have been allowed to --- cos it was in the too hard basket.

Brody and Thora were excited about Destination Q and the outcomes. Now they had a direction to tackle the wicked problem through a range of actions outlined within the revised Qld Drive Tourism Strategy. Specifically they were referring to the development of a Camping Options Tool Kit and the Guidelines for Rest Areas to assist local governments in Qld prepare their own camping best-practice strategies and RV policies (see Chapter 4 - Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-2020). DTESB now had a directive to ‘just get on and do it’ from the Minister of Tourism. She wanted results and she too wanted them quickly. Brody and Thora acknowledged Qld’s progressive approach to freedom camping was going to have two short-term impacts. First, it
would cause massive debate between the different lobbies claiming a stake in the process; and second, every other state would be watching the Qld lead with interest to follow in their own deliberations for freedom camping. Brody continued:

I think there will be other states watching these guidelines pretty carefully ... without a doubt, ah, cos nothing has been done for such a long long time and certainly nothing at a federal level. They just say it’s a state issue but really, it probably is a federal matter.

Even so, Brody was optimistic about achieving a positive outcome for Queensland, moving the political debate forward and not just sideways or under the rug:

We can have [personal or institutional] views one way or the other but now with a state lead initiative we can get things done. Look, you need government at a state level to run a lot of these things or they can fall over.

Thora acknowledged that the freedom camping debate was already alive. She suggested though that the parochialism was slowly softening. She advised part of the DTESB strategy was to try and get a better understanding of what that debate entailed - ‘this was especially why the Camping Options Reference Group’, first introduced by Roger (LG, operations) from Scenic Rim, ‘had been formed’. The Caravan Industry Association of Australia (CIAA), Caravanning Queensland (CQ) and the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) each sat in on that group. From Thora’s understanding, ‘from what I’ve been told that was the first time where those groups have actually come to the same table’. She confirmed CIAA was one of the national organisations ‘that would like to see some of the work being done at the state level feeding up to the federal agenda’.

Simultaneously, DTESB was also engaging with the Qld Local Government Association through the Reference Group as one of the things the state government wished to do was ‘hand more responsibility for freedom camping and more decision-making power back to those local governments’ ensuring their community role in the process.

Recognising the strategic importance for cooperation at all levels of government (see Phillimore & Botterill 2014), and specifically on freedom camping issues, Thora was quick not to dismiss the significance of adopting a federal perspective. ‘It’s starting to happen, so yeah, at that federal level there is some communication like through ASCOT [Australian Standing Committee on Tourism]’. ASCOT is the meeting of the state tourism ministers’ auspices by the Federal Department of Finance and the portfolio of Foreign Affairs and Trade. ASCOT’s objectives are to improve cooperation and coordination of government policies and activities to implement Tourism 2020 and tourism policy matters (Commonwealth Department of Finance 2014). ‘So, they are very much aware of what’s happening and I think in some part they are watching this space to see how
Queensland plays it out’. Thora also referenced another federal link - the National Tourism Signage Reference Group - the one first raised by Brian (LG, operations) from Diamantina Shire. Thora advised further that ‘there is something also happening at that national level’. Thora concluded ‘because the warring factions had been at odds for so long they had actually lost sight of the fact they actually had many things in common. Despite the heavy haze of the battle “smoke” they actually had common ground upon which to work cooperatively at a national policy level’:

So that’s part of what we’re trying to do, to realise, you know, ‘Can you guys listen to what you are saying, listen to each “other”, you’ve actually got some commonalities there. You have got some things you can come together on and there may be some things you’ll never come together on, er, depending on ... who knows?’ So, I think they need to sit down, have a look at what they’re doing now, and how they can change to meet the tourism and community needs of the future. So I think it can be done.

Thora was optimistic the Qld government’s lead would pave the way to achieving outcomes satisfactory to both sides. ‘I think it’s possible to do both’. She admitted to sounding like she was sitting on the fence but acknowledged there was always two sides to a story and she could see both sides of the argument, recognising economic and community benefits on both sides:

I think they can come together and bridge the gap. Um, because um, travel, drive travel in Australia is growing ---- um, I think they can, I think it’s just going to take some time, some thinking and some cooperation on both sides which is starting to happen.

5.7 Discussion

The four LGAs from the policy-level perspective are demonstrated to show differing values and beliefs around the phenomenon of freedom camping. Byron Bay, as a tourist hotspot on the east coast was displaying negative social reactions emanating from the high resident/guest/council interaction. This influenced Byron Shire to adopt an authoritarian position on freedom camping despite the more liberal views of the mayor. Walgett Shire with an agriculture/mining dominant base was shown to exhibit low concern over social impacts of freedom camping. Rather, pragmatically they seek to balance the economic lifeline it brings to commercial businesses in smaller communities versus the economic burden imposed upon the Shire in maintaining sites. However, the capitalist view of the private operators in the tourism sector of Lightning Ridge were shown to influence wider council decisions on freedom camping by resisting any “new” supply that did not “comply” with their modus operandi. Such influence was similarly seen in Boonah.

The public/private sector engagements of the Scenic Rim Regional Council also displayed conservative tendencies preferring to support RV tourism only through existing commercial enterprise, thus presenting an economic protectionist reaction to freedom camping. Birdsville’s liberal approach to freedom camping is demonstrated through appreciation of its seasonal
interruption to their mainstay pastoral economic base. Despite cautionary risk/reward responses from the interaction between the guests and the dual purpose (guests and residents) servicing infrastructure, Diamantina Shire is welcoming of RV visitors. Although Diamantina Shire representative, Brian (LG, operations), made reference to Aboriginal lands, and specifically those through which campers traverse as they cross the Simpson Desert (see p. 197), the wider issue of Indigenous land rights, as a barrier or opportunity to freedom camping, was not raised by any informant at any time through the study. Rather, the reference to Aboriginal reserves and lands both within the Diamantina case study, and previously through the taxonomy (see Site Typology at p. 56), was simply in direct relation to one of the many land tenures (i.e. freehold, vacant crown, national park, main road, or council) all found within Australia.

There was no substantive evidence of strong cooperation or ‘solution-orientated’ emergence (Gynnild 2014, p. 1) from the local level informants with mixed reactions from their engagement at state level. Rather, the legacy from the barrage of information and infiltration from opposing interest groups instead exacerbated local freedom camping politics. Informant attention was drawn to problem-focused power games which muddy interpretation of current policy or deliberately thwarted future policy development through mischief-making, mistrust, or dismissed political importance. Subsequently, local communities, and their respective local governments, remain divided on the phenomenon and continue to grapple with present challenges. While some are envisioning a future with freedom camping presenting new liberating business opportunities supported through ‘political modernisation’ (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 341) others remain captured in past century industry driven conservative business and legislative models.

Such rear-looking ideology is not restricted to caravan and camping. Rather it is symptomatic of tourism more generally. Dredge (2011b) suggests this occurs where forms of tourism present as a wicked problem characterised by complex, multi-level interest structures. Through a review of tourism reform and policy development in Queensland over two decades (1989-2011), she proposes such structures are embedded in institutional arrangements that serve to inhibit whole-of-government approaches to tourism and innovative policy solutions. ‘Not only do the present organisational structures and cultures restrict meaningful collaboration, but strong, vocal and often highly emotive industry support for current arrangements – including the focus on marketing – serve to inhibit the development of alternative arrangements and direction’ (p. 169), even in times when ranging alternatives are presented. A key conclusion emerging from her review of a Labour dominated era, and pre-Campbell Newman’s brief Liberal National Party rein (2012-
2015), was tourism development is potentially “locked-in” to a trajectory shaped by state party ideology:

If tourism is to maintain and assert its important role in Queensland’s economy, and if it is to contribute to social, cultural and environmental well-being and regional sustainability, the industry’s capture of the tourism policy space cannot continue. Vision, political leadership and commitment to a broader set of public interests will be needed in order to address this challenge (p. 169).

The policy space around freedom camping is currently captured by the commercial parks sector of the broader conservatively-based caravanning industry. That position is supported by present legislative arrangements geared towards commercial interests (see Chapter 3 - The constraining period) and regulated by local governments unable or unwilling to engage change or alternatively, uninterested in upsetting the local-based commercial interests or state-based legislative status quos. The four case studies went beyond the rear-looking industry-lead debate to reveal how some visionary local governments are proceeding to consult wider with their community around matters of planning and policy for freedom camping while others are still ‘muddling’ (Lindblom 1959; Parsons 2002) along within their own historic and embedded institutional arrangements. Despite the absence of genuine observable effort and successful attempts at reconciliation between commercial caravanning industry representatives and with freedom camping advocates, the broad political perspectives on freedom camping at each council were shown to remain openly malleable.

The politics of freedom camping policy was demonstrated to be challenged by society for its legitimacy, worthiness, ethical standards, legality, social acceptability and commercial fairness. The practice fosters oppositional political ideologies within regional communities and local governments. The two more significant and accepted petitioners to government were CMCA representing freedom campers and CIAA representing commercial caravan park operators (see also Caldicott et al. 2014b). The strength of ideas, values and beliefs, of these two opposing interests - CMCA with liberal dispositions towards freedom camping versus CIAA with conservative dispositions - is such that, in opposition, neither party is prepared to make way for understanding the “other”. Neither party is showing significant signs of compromise, cooperation or collaboration to move the whole camping sector of RV tourism into the 21st Century, despite claims to the contrary as outlined through respective interviews. While each openly admits to attending to joint dialogue, each continues to blame the “other” for the breakdown in progress – from dialogue to action, planning and policy results – as demonstrated through the following exchanges.
Advocating for freedom of choice camping, Kerry (national, operations) conveyed a keen interest but scepticism towards mutual progress from the joint sittings of the opposing parties. Her response indicated a high level of distrust and strong flavour of the adversarial situation:

Our two Boards have been talking, our Board and the caravan park groups nationally have talked. I’m trying to say let’s work together to come up with a reasonable solution. That’s why I instigated the two Boards to get together to talk at that level, at that high level. Ah, and I believe in trying to do it with an iron hand but nice soft glove first – but if they want to play a game, we’ll play a game. You know, they had their lawyer there so we had our lawyer there, or one of them.

Similarly, Lillian (National, operations), representing the commercial caravan and camping sector was equally keen to nurture proactive environments but also conveyed deep-seated frustration with the lack of progress:

We have an open door or an open invitation to the CMCA to come and have conversations with us. They’re invited to come to consumer fora which are run by industry. We have met with their Board. We have regular communications with some of their directors and their CEO. We have similar conversations with the likes of the Australian Caravan Club to understand what the consumer clubs are about, to listen to their issues. Interestingly, that same invitation isn’t extended to us by CMCA yet they run a number of industry gatherings from which we are expressly refused entry to attend. I would have thought we’re having a fair crack at trying to understand what the consumers actually want and what their legitimate arguments are. A lot of people see this as a “war” between free camping and caravan parks!

Lillian was particularly keen to make the point and reveal CIAA’s provision for cooperative input from consumer groups, those representing the freedom campers. Referring specifically to CMCA, she recalled:

I haven’t heard anything in all the conversations I’ve had around the world, [about] a consumer group as successful and coordinated as what these guys are here in Australia. You know, if you go back to December 2012 we had the word “war” used in their [CMCA] literature. It’s now, you know, we realise there’s a role to be played by the various teams and we’re happy to have conversations with them.

Conversations they have, but trust and respect of the “other” they lack. Despite repeated verbalisations and testimony through multiple inquiry hearings the participating actors within this study demonstrably reiterated the ‘maintenance of current institutional settings and power relations is paramount’ (Mintrom et al. 2014, p. 424).
5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has further unravelled stakeholder values and beliefs particularly those of four local governments; two in New South Wales and two in Queensland in response to the third objective of the thesis. Each LGA was introduced through individual community profiles to show a foundational position of freedom camping within the tourism planning and public-policy space.

The voices of local government informants at the policy and operations-levels were supplemented by views from community/business representatives plus respective state agencies. Those that provide service to their constituents at the local government/community level and also those that administer authoritative power on behalf of the state. The local government cases further demonstrate how the values, interests and beliefs of individual actors and collective bodies intersect with, and within, institutional arrangements of government in general areas of tourism, leisure and recreation planning and decision-making and for tourism public policy specifically. The cases display much evidence of institutional conflict and retention of vested power with little evidence of future leadership: ‘to define and frame problems; to create coalitions of diverse supporters; to build teams to tap relevant knowledge networks; and, to show workability of their new and combined ideas’ (p. 424).

Rather, themes of political ideology, land-use and legislation conflict and scenarios for freedom camping’s future emerged through the interviews revealing a discourse of power relations around freedom camping with stakeholder views, inputs, outputs and outcomes ideologically polarised between classic liberalism to traditional conservatism. The next chapter discusses four major findings of the study framed through the emergent themes of ideology, conflict and future as reflected by the policy and practice of all 41 informants engaged in relationships of power.
Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the mobility of freedom camping as substance to a meta-discourse on contests of place and power. Meta-discourse anticipates a reader’s response and itself responds to a larger discourse already in progress. Argument incorporates the active role of a receiver and are salient to other opinions and viewpoints on the same theme (Bakhtin 1986; Hyland 2001; Hyland & Tse 2004). This thesis proposes that social processes and interpretations influence how ‘society orders, evaluates and decides which practices and meanings to protect and promote’ (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 432). Freedom camping’s use of public space gives cause to examine the politics of place. Informed by the study participants, power was found as the central tenant of current discourse and practice in the freedom camping political space. The relationships between freedom camping policy participants in governing are characterised by power dependence with policy actors negotiating their way through a “swamp” (see Bentley 2014; Head 2010; Schon 1983) of complex problems, of differentiated values and ideas without clear boundaries. Power relations remained central in the analysis of planning and policy for freedom camping. They influenced the study inputs and outputs steering suggestions for future camping practice, policy intervention and evaluations along with offerings for further academic contribution. In presenting these suggestions I acknowledge the ‘grid of constituent forces at play in shaping and legitimising what constitutes knowledge and progress in a complex, inter-disciplinary and multi-scalar domain’ (see Dredge & Jamal 2015, p. 288) and accept them as a single interpretation only and open to critique.

6.2 Synopsis of findings

This thesis contributes to knowledge production through the examination of the three pillars (areas) of freedom camping: the political stakeholders (Chapters 1, 2 and 3); the legislative framework since Federation (see Chapter 4); and local government engagement (Chapter 5). Four key political stakeholder groups in the domestic freedom camping public-policy arena were identified: RVing consumers, commercial caravan park operators; local government (also representing community); and state government (Chapter 2; see also Caldicott et al. 2014b). In the absence of any nationally published Australian policy position on freedom camping, its evolving characteristics were compared with New Zealand, United States, United Kingdom, Central Europe and Sweden (Chapter 3). The review noted no single best-practice and policy responses to freedom camping though each nation’s response has elements of merit that can be
Chapter 6: Discussion

further explored within an Australian context. This chapter is presented in sequence of the four significant findings of the study (Table 23). Each finding is aligned to the originating and guiding objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter 1.

Table 23 - Alignment of findings with sub-themes, objectives and outputs
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 1</strong></td>
<td>There is market failure of freedom camping supply in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme.</strong></td>
<td>Focusing the fight - political ideology underpins conflict (debate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aligns to</strong></td>
<td>Develop a conceptual taxonomy to aid international understanding of freedom camping and understanding of the “other” within contemporary caravanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 1.</strong></td>
<td>Output. The thesis presents an original taxonomy of caravanning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 2</strong></td>
<td>The disjunct in scales of tourism policy in Australia exposes the complexity of Federalism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme.</strong></td>
<td>Concentrating the difference - inconsistent language, legislations, regulations and land tenures underpins policy status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aligns to</strong></td>
<td>Explain the legislative developments of freedom camping in Australia focusing particularly to historic elements of supply and demand, since Federation (1900) generally and auto-mobilisation particularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 2.</strong></td>
<td>Output. The thesis presents an original framework of caravan and camping legislations since Federation conceptualised against four periods of policy activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 3</strong></td>
<td>Community intervention is closing freedom camping policy and practice gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme.</strong></td>
<td>Envisioning the future - freedom camping, its politics and the role of state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aligns to</strong></td>
<td>Critically analyse how local government in Australia, particularly in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, perceives, interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 3.</strong></td>
<td>Output. The thesis presents an original exploratory case study of community engagement (local government) with freedom camping explained with reference to power relations, decision-making and public-policy theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding 4</strong></td>
<td>There is no clear or sequential emergence of planning approaches and policy models of tourism studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meta-theme.</strong></td>
<td>Power relations are steering decision-making in tourism planning and policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aligns to</strong></td>
<td>Interprets public-policy and planning decision-making with reference to public-policy theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective 3.</strong></td>
<td>Output. The thesis presents further incremental amendments to Dredge and Jenkin’s (2007, 2011b) conceptual framework for the study of tourism and planning policy.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 23 presents the key sub-themes of market failure, disjunction in scales of tourism policy and envisioning a future for freedom camping through local government engagement as emergent indicators of a mega-theme of power in relationships – relational, dispositional and structural. The findings are conceptualisations constructed upon the sub-themes emerging from the data (see also Appendix 2.6 – Path to power: emergent themes from data coding).

Market failure and the disjuncture between scales of tourism policy results in different state and local governments implementing independent and uncoordinated regimes for the current practice and future of freedom camping. These range from proactive and accommodating management models to reactive models of regulatory control (Chapter 4 - National snapshot of RV directed initiatives 2013/14 -2016). Such disjointed approaches present barriers for current and new entrants to the camping supply market. They also foster inconsistent presentations and processes across state and local government areas. The multi-government layering is contributing to the contests over freedom camping places and camping spaces in rural and urban communities. The following sections describe each finding within the context of the guiding principles of tourism studies offered by Dredge and Jenkins (2011b) as presented in Chapter 1 – Research approach.

6.3 Finding 1 – There is market failure of freedom camping supply in Australia.

6.3.1 Overview

The major contribution from this finding is the presentation of a taxonomy of caravanning to assist international understanding of the “other” in freedom camping. Freedom camping is an age-old practice, characterised by open camping access to outdoor public space. Campers in this space pay no fee, or only a low or subsidised fee, to a landholder who is most often a representative of the Crown. The growth in demand for “freedom” camping places coupled with the decline in the number of “commercial” caravan and camping spaces in Australia (Caldicott 2011a; Gilbert 2013; Jones 2016b; Prideaux & McClymont 2006; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004; Sadler 2016) has led to widespread debate about merits, impacts and politics of freedom camping, not least to conversations of “market failure”.

Market failure in camping supply is triggering ideological and institutional debate around the phenomenon of freedom camping generally and the contest of space particularly. RV markets are not homogenous and growing sub-groups (neo-tribes) of RVers are seeking alternative tourist and
Chapter 6: Discussion

Life-style choices. In seeking individual experiences these neo-tribes are no longer unquestionably accepting of the existing model of commercial caravan park supply which is premised on aged legislation and towards a homogeneous market. Instead, freedom campers prefer alternate camping supply away from the physical and economic confines of commercial parks and a growing group are also living for extended periods in their RVs as “mobile residents” (Caldicott et al. 2017b). Be they transient residents or transient tourists this new market is swinging away from static caravan park environments in increasing numbers with the number of nights by domestic travellers alone at non-commercial caravan parks and camping grounds increasing 24% over the previous year to 18.1 million (Tourism Research Australia 2016a). Swinging freedom campers (see Chapter 3 – Taxonomy of Caravanning) are making deliberate choices about their mode of accommodation, specifically with reference to vehicle types, site selection, and socialisation and price points, each collectively aligned to meet the individualistic nature of their present-day travel desires.

There are a range of economic, social, demographic and technological factors driving this splitting of the RV market and fostering disequilibrium between existing supply and new demand in caravan and camping, not least rising property values in coastal tourism hotspots (see Sadler 2016). The “emerging” freedom market in particular is exposing a caravan and camping environment with a widening “gap” in the market (Neubauer 2016). Within this environment freedom campers spawn “new” camping supply options through their sometimes spontaneous occupation of random spaces. They occupy places, particularly public spaces, not specifically zoned for tourism production or regulated for camping supply. The complexity of caravan and camping networks, inclusive of the ranging neo-tribes, and their language is dominating local level (local government) policy and planning environments particularly for land use planning and the contest to public space. The occupation of alternative spaces is generating unrest within communities on levels of amenity and sustainability.

Common dilemmas surrounding this phenomenon extend to: forms of nomadism where mobile resident lifestyles clash with sedentary resident lifestyles; forms of tourist versus resident consumption; sociocultural use of limited resources and space; and, challenges to the rule of state.

The four central stakeholder groups are found to be highly engaged in the freedom camping planning and policy debate – camping consumers, camp site supply operators, local government regulators and state government legislators – each with various conversations taking place within and among these groups. The myriad of views emanating through such discourses informed this thesis and led to further considerations of the rules of the game: governance (relationships
between the state, the citizens and the market); policies (choice among alternatives) and politics (contest or struggle); along with instruments (legislation, policy, strategies, guidelines, budgets) available in the management, accessibility and distribution of resources for freedom camping.

### 6.3.2 Stakeholder networks, interest groups and agencies by level of institutionalism

Interest groups, often used interchangeably with lobby groups, pressure groups, organised interests, communities of interest, and stakeholders, attempt to influence government policy in favour of their special interest or perspective on particular issues. Domestic stakeholders in freedom camping present in a number of ways: macro, meso and micro scale (e.g. national, state and local); intensity of relationship to the problem (e.g. high, moderate and low); or by their degree of institutionalism (e.g. high, moderate or low); along a continuum (Beach et al. 2010; Fenna 2004). Beach et al. (2010, p. 35) acknowledge the ‘the broad spectrum of actors and groups who may have, or believe they have, a legitimate claim to participate in state led public participation’ and the complication this brings to the policy-making process (see also Gyr 2010). With interests ranging from commercial industry, residents, activists and the media, Beach et al. (2010) exclaim:

> ... the extent of inclusion [or exclusion] of various stakeholders has not been [is not always] satisfactorily resolved. Additionally, as agencies seek to meet these challenges by implementing arrays of stakeholder engagement programs it remains unclear how most agencies define stakeholders, or group stakeholders into different classifications, or explicitly differentiate between stakeholders and community (p. 35).

With poles of institutionalism anchored in characteristics such as organisational stability, permanency, professionalism, expertise, common interest and member relevance – producer groups are those considered to have high levels of institutional attributes (Fenna 2004) such as elected governments from national to local, their senior political advisors, senior appointed bureaucrats and executive management teams (see category ‘Government’ at Table 24)

The producer group level is relatively stable in organisational and ideological structure even though individual members may transfer in and out across time, through government elections for example. Non-producer groups are towards the middle of the continuum (see category ‘Agencies/business/associations’ at Table 24). They may be agencies formed to deliver government policy, sometimes directly and sometimes from arms’ length, government departments and peak body associations. Much of the freedom camping political “action”, particularly the political lobbying by the CMCA and CIAA takes place here although there is no mutual exclusiveness in the horizontal levels.
Single interest groups, at the right of the spectrum, have the lowest level of institutionalisation. These became visible and prominent in the freedom camping debate as individual towns rallied for RV Friendly status or rallied against such moves.

Table 24 - Stakeholder networks, interest groups and agencies by level of institutionalism
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High)</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONALISATION</th>
<th>(Low)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government</strong></td>
<td><strong>Agency</strong></td>
<td><strong>Business/Associations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Federal Ministers &amp; political advisors</td>
<td>TA, EPA, CIAA, CMCA, ARTN, ALGA, ACA, RDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>State Ministers &amp; political advisors</td>
<td>LPMA, DNPRSR, NPWS, RTA, NSWF, MRD, DNRM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Local Government Mayors and executive staff</td>
<td>DLG, LGA, RTO, ROC, RBC Business Chambers, Resident Associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACA</td>
<td>Australian Caravan Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALGA</td>
<td>Australian Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTN</td>
<td>Australian Regional Tourism Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCIA</td>
<td>Caravan and Camping Industry Association (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIAA*</td>
<td>Caravan Industry Association Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMCA</td>
<td>Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLG</td>
<td>Division of Local Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNPRSR</td>
<td>Dept. of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNRNM</td>
<td>Dept. of Natural Resources and Mining (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP&amp;I</td>
<td>Dept. of Planning and Infrastructure (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>Economic Development Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPMA</td>
<td>Land and Property Management Authority (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRD</td>
<td>Main Roads Department (Qld)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSWF</td>
<td>New South Wales Forestry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPWS</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBC</td>
<td>Regional Business Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDA</td>
<td>Regional Development Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Regional Organisation of Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>Regional Tourism Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTA</td>
<td>Roads and Transport Authority (NSW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STO</td>
<td>State Tourism Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA</td>
<td>Tourism Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* CRVA rebranded to become CIAA in 2015
Residents form interest groups to present as a united bloc of power (either for or against proposals) in recognition that grass root individuals in isolation are limited in their ability to effect the determination of policy settings (see category ‘Other’ at Table 24). Groups form to place their demands on government and articulate same through a variety of structures such as other significant individuals (perhaps experts or political entrepreneurs), institutions, public relation campaigns, public protests and the media. Membership to this level is less stable and may swell or disappear across time relative to public mood and fluctuation of the issue at hand.

While often viewed in a negative way, the term interest group or stakeholder is used by political analysts in a value-neutral way, recognising the important role they play in the determination of contested policy settings. A contested area is perceived as a problem to one group who may be misaligned to values of another group and may look to an arbiter (government or renowned expert) to get support for action by drawing attention to the problem. Government is interested to learn – what is the problem, who perceives it to be a problem, how is it defined, how has it manifested, and what way does the interest group wish the support to proceed (Colebatch 2009)?

By taking note of all the different interest groups and pursuing a collaborative stakeholder orientated approach to problem-solving and solutions-forming agencies can achieve cooperative and sustainable outcomes rather than delivering expert driven and imposed ultimatums (Beach et al. 2010; Bramwell & Lane 2000, 2011; d’Angella 2007; Jamal & Getz 1995; Lawton & Weaver 2015; Ruhanen 2013). The collaborative approach does not necessarily exclude a role for experts but rather brings the expert (ise) into the process at a strategic time. This may be during a stage which requires specialist knowledge not commonly available or understood by other stakeholders or perhaps, as is common in tourism development and destination planning, as a consultant facilitator of the wider planning and policy process.

Wray et al. (2010) developed best-practice guidelines for regions to manage, develop and market sustainable tourism. Their report highlights:

- Regional destinations which have a strong level of support from their state or territory governments, well-established regional and/or local tourism organisations, supportive local governments, and local leaders that foster and implement a shared vision for sustainable tourism across government, businesses and community stakeholders are well-placed to innovate, compete and implement sustainable tourism best practice into the future (p. iv).

As this study of freedom camping politics demonstrates, to achieve alignment of such optimum levels of cross-discipline and cross-border cooperation is difficult, particularly at the community
level. Working with Scenic Rim Regional Council (see Chapter 5 – Case study three: Scenic Rim Regional Council) to produce a local tourism strategy, Dredge, Ford and Whitford (2011) specifically acknowledged the integral importance of local, aligned and integrated support of regional stakeholders additional to logistics, resources and expertise from external providers. Through such inclusive engagement processes, non-producer interest groups were shown to be an integral component of tourism policy-making processes and of institutional arrangements in general. Planning workshops provide safe environments for stakeholders to gain greater appreciation of the “other” in tourism planning and policy development. The interwoven connection between the interest groups in freedom camping and the government, the government and the camping policy issue, and the policy issue and interest groups gives rise to the notion of multiple stakeholders, of varying interests, within the particular contest and policy arena of freedom camping (see Chapter 3 – Stakeholder and policy).

The influence of societal structures and local community discourse on freedom camping was evident across conversations with the informants but particularly poignant at the local policy-level with the local government mayors. Each was strongly conveying what their community expected and what was also acceptable to them as individuals. Specifically, freedom camping was shown to be valued differently by their respective communities. Robert (Byron Shire), was most sympathetic to the ideals of the freedom campers but conversely he was acutely aware that his community was expressing distain towards the activity. In contrast, Barry’s Scenic Rim community was speaking to upholding existing legislations that protected the community’s values and norms in a traditional market sense. Maurice (Walgett Shire) and Malcolm (Diamantina Shire) were more pragmatic. Each expressing their individual community appreciations to the economic contribution brought through freedom camping though cautioning a need to monitor the situation as numbers grow and communities head towards thresholds that would trigger further serious planning conversations. Such examples demonstrate that the macro society, as an entity, cannot act upon the issue of freedom camping. However, society’s influence is transmitted through human and symbolic interaction (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” of caravanning), with engagement and relationships bringing layers of structural power to bear on micro planning and policy-making for freedom camping in local communities.

The position of the higher engaged camping stakeholder groups within communities (see Finding 2 – this Chapter; see also Caldicott et al., 2014b) is at times shown to be polarised to a height that one might interpret as combative. This position was expressed by Lillian (National, operations) - ‘a lot of people see this as a war between free camping and caravan parks’ and also Noelene (Local,
operations) as she conveyed ‘her RTO was looking to strike the right balance between the “waring” parties’. In other circumstances stakeholders are seen to be interested in common issues and engage in exploratory dialogue through for instance, joint sittings of the CIAA and CMCA Boards (see Chapter 4 - Industry and consumer [lobby] political perspectives). However, they still display tendencies of oscillation between collaborative solutions on one hand, and power driven supremacy, on the other. Local government, as the broader regulatory entity within the debate, is shown also to be divided. On one hand, they are exposed to be innovative in accommodating the “moralistic” call of the freedom camping lobbies – a position that affords favouritism to the consumer. On the other hand, they are seen to be duty-bound to the “normative” rule of state and the legislative statues they administer on behalf of the state. This latter position affords favouritism to the market; private enterprise and the status quo. Drawn at time in both directions, swinging from the capitalist right to the socialist left, and back again, the weight of evidence though (see Chapter 4 – National snapshot of RV Friendly initiatives) indicates councils are incrementally making way for the “new” albeit “swinging” and “self-contained” market of freedom camping (see Chapter 3 – Taxonomy of caravanning).

Rather than demonstrating a distinct leaning or shift away from the market-lead neoliberal approach to local governance, councils are cautiously exploring new innovation and models of RV tourism operations; in parallel with a more inclusive mind to fostering economic and community development. Several informants, particularly those at the LG operations-level, expressed desires for an end to the RVing conflict but they did not believe individually, nor through their LG institutions, that they possessed the capacity to bring about change. Instead, they sought assistance in the form of entrepreneurship to bring the fractious political process to an outcome beyond the market-lead interests of the existing camping supply model. Their preferences were for business models capable of delivering broader public interests such as those offering flexible pricing and price-point choices. Such a model may emulate those delivered by early adopters within low-cost airlines (Johnson et al. 2008; Ros 2016), hotels (Chen 2014; Radha et al. 2010) and taxi transport sectors (Logue & Hollerer 2015; Morozov 2015) for example. Such outcomes, in the words of participants, would move the debate beyond the resource draining status quo. In their frustration they were looking for external policy direction:

Perhaps there could be some direction or some answers coming forth with influence of the state government. I believe it is a state issue. It is certainly not a council issue alone (Brian, LG operations).

and
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Without some stronger leadership from the state, like a real intervention, we have no option but to take our policy cue ultimately from the elected councillors (John, LG operations).

and

I think we need to look strategically as to how to resolve this. And I would suggest ARTN from a policy perspective and certainly from a signage point of view the NTSRG [National Tourism Signage Reference Group] and if not the Federal Department of Tourism needs to look at how it is resolved at a national level (Brian, LG operations).

and

I think the problems in other terms is at a higher level. I am hoping the outcomes that you can identify, in your final thesis, can identify where the problems lie and actually make sure that these are addressed or on the agenda of those that can actually make a difference, a policy difference (Brian, LG operations).

While Brian and John were particularly looking to a higher state of political authority for leadership they also acknowledged that policy entrepreneurs need not necessarily be aligned to the state. They were each looking to state or national associations such as their local government association (LGA); Australian Regional Tourism Network (ARTN); and National Tourism Signposting Reference Group (NTSRG) for help (see category ‘Agencies/businesses and associations’ at Table 24). Single interest groups, at the right of the spectrum, have the lowest level of institutionalisation. These became visible and prominent in the freedom camping debate as individual towns rallied for RV Friendly status or rallied against such moves (Table 24).

Such considerations align to Kingdon’s (2011, p. 122) conception that policy entrepreneurs could be found within any policy community ‘in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organisations’ at local, state and federal levels. However, Dredge and Jenkins (2003b) contend the nature of intergovernmental relations in Australia underpins a Federalism without ‘clearly defined tourism related roles for each level of government’ and that it ‘has become academic dogma that Federalism is a “problem” rather than an asset’ to the development of sustainable tourism. Brian (LG, operations) was certainly also looking to me as the perceived academic expert, beyond government (local, state or federal) and any specific lobby alliance (CIAA or CMCA), to harness all stakeholder views and shift the freedom camping issue to a place for potential political change – again seeking a place of higher production in caravanning for his LGA.
6.4 Finding 2 - Disjunct in scales of tourism policy exposes Federalism’s complexity

6.4.1 Overview

The major contribution from this finding is the presentation of a framework conceptualising caravan and camping focusing events since Federation against four periods of policy activity. State interests versus community interests in freedom camping were found to not always be in sync. As witnessed, the state and local parochialism emphasised the complexities of the freedom camping phenomenon and challenges of managing tourism (inclusive of camping) under a federated political system. Seven states and territories each have different legislations surrounding caravan and camping provision and present different interpretations for freedom camping within those legislations. State and local legislations since Federation were found to align to four conceptual regulatory periods – enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling – each contributing to the parochialism.

The enabling period (1900 – 1986) was particularly focused to trade, transit and short-term holiday camping initially in the absence of formal commercial parks though these did develop in line with increasing demand. Freedom camping was necessary for exploration, trade and leisure travel. It was accepted as normal travel behaviour though as “automobile” driven demand grew, particularly for leisure sites along national transit routes post World War II (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b), legislation developed facilitating commercial caravan park development. Full-time occupation (permanent living) though, in caravan parks, was unlawful. However, in practice this was often not consistently policed.

The constraining period (1986 – 2006) was particularly focused on the national low-cost housing crisis (JLGPHOWG 1986) and to bridging the demand that unlawful permanent living in parks was challenging. This came at the expense of short-term tourism provision. The legislative shift coupled with increasing land prices, particularly for coastal and metropolitan sites (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a; Sadler 2016), triggered a change in site use within some parks moving from mixed tourism and residential to wholly residential. Other parks redeveloped for other commercial purposes, away from tourism accommodation completely. This trend for caravan park repurposing is still active today (Black 2017; Sadler 2016). The result was a decline in tourist sites nationally and a succession of legislative reform in the caravan park sector directed at enhancing tenancy rights for the permanent residential market. This caused displacement and
disenfranchisement for a segment of the short-term camping market. In the face of declining sites and increasing demand (Caldicott 2011b), the latter buoyed by onset of the baby-boomer market, contest for the remaining tourist sites escalated as did the price for successful site occupation. The effected RVers sought alternative camping supply through freedom camping.

The acknowledging period (2006 – 2013/14) hosted seven state-level parliamentary inquiries. Each independently found freedom camping to be a policy issue that was not being addressed within existing legislations. The inquiries identified the need for legislative reform facilitative of state and local governments to make provision for the “new” and “growing” freedom camping market. With inconsistent caravan and camping legislations across the various states and their local governments, and in the face of a persistent lobby by camping consumers pursing the “market failure” rationale, local governments independently started to experiment with their own RVing legislative reform. Each council is however, moving at a different pace and each focusing towards different legislative mechanisms to treat their independent community circumstances. This again is fostering a less than seamless accommodation supply for camping consumers.

The facilitating/trialling period (2013/14 – the present) is increasingly witness to local governments, across Australia, trailing and implementing freedom camping provision on public land under specifically devised local bylaws. Such trials and provision is highlighting the divide within some local communities as stakeholders of opposite ideological positions on the market failure argument lobby local, state and federal governments for favour to their particular values and beliefs (CIAA 2016b, 2016c). The heightened local government engagement with freedom camping provision continues to trigger protest from both commercial caravan park operators fearful of reduced market share and in some cases community residents concerned over potential diminishment of their sedentary community amenity. Community fear is of exposure to “deviant” behaviours sometimes associated with transient societies (see Chapter 4 – The constraining period). As Jones and Shaw (2012) argue, residents will campaign against the development of tourism experiences if they feel it will threaten their way of life. The ideological divide over freedom camping, particularly its perceived economic and amenity costs and benefits, continue to fracture some communities while others have embraced the phenomenon. The latter reporting varying levels of community satisfaction (Simpson 2016; Stylianou & Sherwood 2016).

In response to the policy disjunct, several state-level innovations also transpired across the facilitation period. By example, the Qld government developed a Camping Options Toolkit to assist their local governments in the planning and policy space around alternate camping supply. The
NSW government received recommendations from their General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3 to develop guidelines for commercial and non-commercial camping but this recommendation has yet to proceed to legislation. Western Australia introduced nature-based camping as a specific “new” category to facilitate increased freedom camping supply within their state-level caravan and camping legislation (see Chapter 4 – Innovative policy breakthrough). Continuing the disjunct, local governments across all states, however, continued to develop independent bylaws to further facilitate their own camping supply provisions (see Chapter 5 – Local government challenges; and, National snapshot of RV initiatives).

6.4.2 Stakeholder networks, interest groups and agencies by level of engagement

Those most visibly engaged, and most visibly conflicted in the political melee over freedom camping are local government (LG), CIAA and CMCA. Each of the three independent bodies has their own internal political and institutional layering (see Figure 26). They each have well defined governance structures with a board of directors or council (policy-level) supported by structured leadership teams (bureaucratic operational levels) and strong membership (or ratepayer) funded revenue bases.

![Figure 26 - Highly engaged freedom camping stakeholder networks and characteristics](source: Author)
Within and between these layers, internal power struggles are also shown to sometimes arise (see Chapter 5 – Byron Shire Council operations-level perspective). Though key personnel may also enter and leave the institution across time, the core entities continue to display strong general characteristics and qualities that highlight their divergence in political ideologies in relation to the freedom camping: CMCA (social left); LG (pragmatic middle: though some would argue with power to be exercised free not of bourgeois influence, but merely free of bourgeois control\(^{14}\)); CIAA (capitalist right).

CMCA pursues a laissez a faire lifestyle for their members highly premised on moralistic convictions of freedom and a perceived common “right” of access to public land such as Western Lands, roadways and public carparks. Thomas Malthus, in 1817 famously afforded a useful analogy illustrating such convictions of freedom (see Celikkol 2011; Ensor 1951; 2006; Kittrell 1966). According to Kittrell (1966, p. 610), through an *Essay on the Principle of Population* Malthus proposed:

> Freedom of trade ... is a vision which it is to be feared can never be realised. But still it should be our object to make as near approaches to it as we can. It should always be considered as the great general rule. And when any deviations from it are proposed, those who propose them are bound clearly to make out the exception.

CIAA attempts “clearly to make out the exception” on freedom camping by holding steadfast to the legislative status quo; that which is currently protecting the market-based prescription and upholding proprietary “law” in their attempts to restrict freedom camping. Local governments across Australia are on one hand, representative of the state, upholding state legislation as it pertains to caravanning and public land assets under their care, control and management. Within the current freedom camping debate such legislations seek to uphold environmental, health and public safety standards. They also favour the valuable contributions (direct and indirect) that the commercial caravan parks bring to local communities such as land rates, employment, local spending, community donations and cooperative marketing (see BDO 2013; BDO 2014; CCIA-Tweed Region 2015). On the other hand, LGs also seek to balance these capitalist interests with advancement to broader social, economic and community development through provisioning for low-cost tourism production. Sometimes such accommodations are beyond the bounds of present caravanning and public lands legislations (see Chapter 4 – The constraining period).

\(^{14}\) (Jenkins & Pigram 2003, p. 383)
In the context of planning and policy-making, tourism production can be regarded from two sustainability standpoints. First, local physical, sociocultural and economic environments are treated in such a way that they will be maintained as a viable resource and functioning systems in the long term (United Nations 1992a, 1992b). Second, the industry at issue must be maintained at a healthy level into the future as well with minimal negative local impacts (Bramwell 2010; Malek & Costa 2015; Timothy 2001). Most scholars of tourism and planning agree that ‘sustainable tourism development can best be accomplished by involving local residents in decision making of tourism and by collaboration among many stakeholders in decision-making matters’ (Timothy 2001, p. 149; see also Malek & Costa, 2015). Through Tourism and Political Boundaries, Timothy (2001) reasons where political borders intersect (i.e. between states or between councils) and societal overlap exists challenging situations form. Theories and paradigms used to explain economic, political, social and geographical patterns in one geographic or political arena rarely offer adequate explanations in cross-border environments. I argue that the geo-political contexts offered by Timothy similarly apply to planning and policy-making across the conceptual boundaries of models and frameworks tendered for the study of tourism planning and policy (see Chapter 1 – Research approach). Herein, inter-disciplinary, inter-agency, and inter-ideological conflict consequently require special consideration though it remains firm that cross-boundary cooperative and participatory approaches to freedom camping’s planning and policy are most vital in both contexts.

Because values, norms, community expectations and political ideologies can differ on opposite sides of physical boundaries, Timothy (2001, p. 162) warns that ‘extra effort is required to bring to fruition cooperative efforts’. Regardless of the suitability of freedom camping, as offered by several operations-level local government participants (i.e. Brian, John, Gail and Roger) as a project for joint efforts nationally, freedom camping still operates within different place, space and sector boundaries. Actors separated by the seven Australian state and territory borders and the 564 local government political boundaries often hold tight, and often extremely parochially, to differences in perceptions, values and prejudices towards freedom camping. Such personal and institutional differences also cross-discipline, policy and political bounds.

Political and social differences also result in ‘contrasting planning regulations’ (Wu 1998, p. 192) across borders which often lead to conflicts and a disintegration of cooperative efforts. Administrative and organisational differences also create difficult constraints to national cooperation. Achieving shared goals for freedom camping is difficult when agencies in each state or LGA have divergent mandates and/or disparate views for its management. Timothy (2000)
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submits that challenges arise when different levels of government that are responsible for different aspects of planning and policy meet at common boundaries. Differences in interpretation of contractual meanings can ‘further create communication barriers and lead to inaction or disputes between sides and between states’ (Timothy 2001, p. 163). This “difference”, and the concentration by participating stakeholders in freedom camping to the differences, is poignant within the cross-border study zone of Queensland and New South Wales, (see Chapter 1 – Introducing local government engagement). It is particularly highlighted by Brian (LG, operations) as he relays his Diamantina Shire experiences (see Chapter 1 - Figure 3: Major access corridors for RV travel in Australia) dealing with five different governmental jurisdictions at the state boundary marker of Popples Corner (see section 5.6.3).

Local authorities in Australia have few or no rights to formulate formal treaties or working agreements with their cross-state neighbours. Where they do exist, Timothy (2001, p. 164) suggests ‘strategies for accomplishing cross-border … planning have tended to develop informally in local communities’. A successful example of interstate and inter-council project cooperation within the Qld/NSW border study zone is the themed drive tourism trail - “Rainforest Way” (Caldicott 2000; Planning for People 2005), though it holds no legal statue and ‘no authority can compel compliance’ (Johnstone 1995, p. 51). This lack of statutory compliance across borders was supported by caravanning industry association representative Lillian (National, operations) as she also lamented the lack of national planning and policy, particularly as they relate to RV manufacturing standards:

We have issues with border creep in terms of multi-jurisdictional activity. We also have problems in terms of our language. We have been fractionised in the past and there is a lot of loose language floating in the marketplace.

Lillian’s genuine concern over discrepancies between states and between lobbies over clear definitions, around self-containment of RVs for instance, makes it hard for local government officers like Brian (LG, operations) to effectively and uniformly manage freedom camping in his cross-border location. Consequently, integrated state/local level partnerships are difficult to achieve, under the federated political system of Australia (see Chapter 4 – The enabling period). Matters as small as signage, with its associated common symbols and placement standards (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual Framework: Understanding the “other” in caravanning), are state controlled and different between states. As Herzog (1986, p. 5) observes:

Although citizens, bureaucrats, scholars and elected officials on both sides of the [state] border recognised the need for local coordination, the principle of national [or even state and local government] sovereignty continued to impede the formation of any truly
binational [bi-state or bi-council] form of boundary governance. Thus, decisions would persist within frameworks of separate jurisdictions.

Community-based planning is considered one way to eliminate, or at least reduce, the effect of core-periphery conflict (e.g. central vs local government control). Much of the seminal literature on community-based tourism planning (Gunn 1994; Jamal & Getz 1995; Murphy 1985) conditions the importance of tourism development process and decision-making authority remain with the local authorities and the local people. Grassroots participation in community planning and policy-making for freedom camping remains imperative where relevant actors can participate more effectively in the next wave of tourism planning and policy-making for their communities albeit in accord with ratifying local and state authorities (Sroypetch & Caldicott 2017). Engaging locals through involved, inclusive and meaningful ways in the process will alleviate challenges and promote community ownership to well-considered tourism planning programs (Hall 2011a; Malek & Costa 2015; Ruhanen 2013). Gunn (1994, p. 111) suggests that ‘development plans would bear little fruit unless those most effected are involved from the start’, reflecting the position of Grybovych et al. (2011) who felt their small rural community in British Columbia was under siege from uncontrolled (unregulated) tourism development. Freedom camping in some Australian communities is similarly described as uncontrolled development (see Chapter 4 – New South Wales). To bring some order to the practice, specifically through strategic planning and policy, local communities such as the City of Greater Geraldton in WA conducted extensive community and state consultation in the course of introducing an RV Friendly tourism strategy for their town (see Chapter 4 – Local government test case). Such local level engagement in tourism planning and policy-making reinforces the enduring words of Murphy (1985, p. 153):

Tourism ... relies on the goodwill and cooperation of local people because they are part of its product. Where development and planning do not fit in with local aspirations and capacity, resistance and hostility can ... destroy the industry’s potential altogether.

Subsequently, Shone (2011, p. 153) continues to highlight attempts by governments ‘to reconnect with communities by refocusing the basic unit of economic and social development at the regional and local levels’ in a ‘shift from local government to local governance’ (see also Beaumont & Dredge 2010; Dredge & Jamal 2012; Dredge & Pför 2008). Governance, according to Dredge and Jenkins (2011b, p. 21) reinforces ‘the relationships between the state, civil society and economic interests through which decisions are made that “steer” a society’ (see also Börzel & Risse 2005; Scott et al. 2008). Achieving aspirations of governance, that which provides citizens’ voice and allows their collective goals to be fulfilled must be balanced with the capacity of elected representatives to exercise leadership. In the complex systems and networks freedom camping
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this balance is proven not to be easy to achieve (see Chapter 3 – The taxonomy of caravanning; and, Chapter 4 – Local government’s challenge). Korten (1981, p. 613) contends, ‘the more complex the problem, the greater the need for localised solutions and for value innovations – both of which call for broadly based participation in decision processes’.

Local participatory planning though need not be at odds with centralised planning (Yüksel et al. 2005). Bringing decision-making for freedom camping closer to the population disperses responsibilities both within and outside of government structures and devolves state powers to democratically elected local government. In turn local government is better placed to encourage wider participation in community policy-making and reduces the likelihood of a concentration of power with market dominance (Borges et al. 2014; Yüksel et al. 2005). Such governance is ‘the type of regulation typical of the cooperative state, where state and non-state actors participate in mixed public/private policy networks’ (Mayntz 2002, p. 21) though ‘hierarchical modes of steering are usually reserved to states and public actors who can allocate values authoritatively and enforce rules’ (Börzel & Risse 2005, p. 196). The examples shown through Chapter 4, those featuring Destination Q in Qld and The North Coast Destination Network in NSW, demonstrate the relativities between “steering” and “success”. The processes used in developing the Camping Options Toolkit at the Qld state level proved successful, at least at the output stage though outcomes are yet to be fully realised and measured. However, the attempts in NSW to roll out a similar program at the local/regional level failed highlighting the practical implications in the institutional “shift” of power from government (centralised) state processes to governance (decentralised) processes in the regions. It stems also to local government being a creature of the state on one hand, while on the other hand, is autonomous and accountable to local communities (Dredge 2001a; McKinlay Douglas Ltd 2006).

Within “ideal” participatory frameworks of governance, the mono-interest ideologies of lobbies, such as those in freedom camping for instance, need not remain distanced from each other in their contest for supreme power at the expense of the “other”. Rather, through re-democratisation, policy networks can provide more equitable opportunity for full citizenry participation, including community and business interest groups, bringing joint ownership over the decision-making (Dredge & Jenkins 2011b; Healey 2007), a process attempted through the ARRVCF and again with NCDN. In both cases, the old school transitive processes (through struggle there is a winner and a looser) was unable to be transitioned across to new intransitive processes (a policy community is benefitted) to bring about constructive planning and promote innovative
policy adjustment – either incrementally or perhaps even radically – for freedom camping (Figure 27).

Figure 27 - Planning and policy innovation spectrum
Source: Caldicott 2014

6.5 Finding 3. Community intervention is closing camping policy and practice gaps

6.5.1 Overview

The major contribution from this finding is the original presentation of an exploratory case study of community engagement (local government) with freedom camping explained with reference to power relations, decision-making and public-policy theory. Four local governments (2xNSW:2xQld) cases provide contextual understanding to the way different communities interpret freedom camping and then their reactions to the phenomenon. Each council is engaging in freedom camping with different levels of intervention as they experience different impacts, both benefit and costs. They also use varying institutional mechanisms and legal instruments to deal with freedom camping’s direct consequences and also any consequences arising from their present and proposed policy intervention.

Byron Shire was mainly focused on social issues and disruption from freedom camping on local resident amenity and environmental impacts but was shifting from its hard-line “no-tolerance” stance to one of looking for an “accommodating” position. Scenic Rim Regional Council was tolerant to low-level freedom camping but emphasising need to stay within existing legislative bounds in any future provision of camping supply. Walgett Shire was likewise tolerant, and indeed proactive, to the practice but concerned towards direct costs incurred by Council to support increasing camping demand. Diamantina Shire was welcoming of freedom campers as their
presence and spending triggers indirect injection of state and federal government funding that supports public infrastructure which enhances local resident amenity.

Though the local communities each expressed differing perceptions as to their immediate level of impact from freedom camping they each expressed common frustration with lack of consistency in camping legislations across local boundaries with neighbouring councils and borders with their neighbouring states. The mayors and operational staff variously looked to outside assistance in managing the phenomenon, particularly from state government or state-based agencies and national associations. All agreed that freedom camping was also a phenomenon in need of future monitoring as they acknowledged its strong growth. However, it was only at the policy level where prospects of freedom camping as an accommodation alternative with stand-alone legislative provision was not unanimously supported with one mayoral dissident. Despite the policy-level split (3 For: 1 Against) operational level LG participants universally believed freedom camping would continue to develop, would continue to contest the use of public space, and would require future accommodating legislation.

6.5.2 The politics of freedom camping in local communities

To examine the politics of freedom camping policy, its implementation and impacts of practice on local communities is to look beyond micro, meso and macro processes as independent forces and to search for ‘the meta-level of societal forces’ shaping the politics of freedom camping planning and policy. According to Williams (2002), ‘reconciling competing claims on a place ... is not simply a debate about which uses, meanings, and values are at stake. It also involves examining the appropriate social processes and institutions by which society orders, evaluates and decides which practices and meanings to protect and promote’ (p. 365). ‘The planning and management of resources for freedom camping are inherently political activities, as land and water are valued for a variety of competing uses by users with diverse perceptions and motivations (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 417). The multi-purpose characters of rural and urban landscapes mean it is ‘perhaps inevitable that, given the finite supply of the countryside, conflicts occur between different demands on the rural resource base’ (Pigram 1993, p. 161). Additionally, with ‘a tendency for commodification and privatisation of public lands ... free public access [for freedom camping] has been progressively eroded and the sustainable access to public lands is threatened’ (McIntyre et al. 2001, p. 434) (see Chapter 2 – International comparisons):

Attitudes and approaches to providing recreational access vary around the globe because of different historical developments and legacies, physical environments, land
ownership rights and attitudes, government initiatives, or lack thereof, past and present legislative provisions and many other factors (McIntyre et al. 2001, p. 435).

Williams (2002) clearly articulates how leisure and recreational resources, and tourist travel, present opportunities to examine matters such as the politics of place. Williams (p. 356), for example, uses Urry’s example of changing mobility with reference to the automobile:

It reconfigures civil society involving distinct ways of dwelling, travelling and socialising in, and through, an automobilised time-space. Automobility necessarily divides workplaces from the home producing lengthy commutes; it splits home and shopping and destroys local retailing outlets; it separates home and various kinds of leisure site(s); it splits up families which live in distant places; it necessitates leisure visits to sites lying on the road network (Urry 2000, p. 59).

To further the automobile analogy to the self-contained RV, and specifically freedom camping, this mode of travel ‘integrates but transposes the separate concepts of mobility versus permanent residency and leisure versus work’ (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 433). The domestic versus work versus leisure agency of the modern RV (see Beilharz & Supki 2009; Simpson 2008) combined with the spatiality of road networks facilitate opportunity for “new” spaces of and for leisure and work as freedom campers increasingly return to the highways for in-transit camping places and/or alternate places of temporary destination domicile (see Chapter 3 – Shifts in camping behaviour) (see also Caldicott & Harris 2015c; Caldicott et al. 2017a; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a). ‘Modern leisure is a constituting factor in the politics of specific places by making and resisting claims on the meaning and use of spaces, claims that often collide with one another as well as with non-recreational uses and meanings’ (Butler 2004, p. 363).

This study of politics surrounding freedom camping within local communities shows a measured though consistent flow towards incrementalism: innovation moving from an arena of central and reactive regulation to one of community provision and proactive community-based management (see Chapter 4 – Byron Shire Council policy and operations-level perspectives). At the state level, parliamentary inquires and successive policy shifts have given rise to “punctuated” policy innovation (Baumgartner et al. 2014), comparative through the timelines highlighted at Chapter 4. Such freedom camping policy innovation extends to the “new” caravan and camping statutory categories in WA (e.g. Nature-parks) and the non-statutory Camping Options Tool Kit guidelines released in Qld (see Chapter 4 – Innovative policy breakthrough; and, Camping Options Tool Kit).

The analysis of freedom camping politics evidences that societies’ norms and values are being constantly negotiated and redefined. It is through such power negotiation that discourses
representing both present-day conventional (commercial) and alternative (freedom) camping cultures emerge maintaining the plurality of ‘norms, values and ideas, and systems of differentiation’ (Foucault 2002, p. 344). Binary opposites such as CIAA’s conventions and CMCA’s alternatives have been, at times, respectively presented as normal and deviant behaviours making power asymmetries visible (see Chapter 2 – Stakeholders and policy). The power centric model for policy studies (see Findings 4 - Figure 28 below) challenges earlier approaches of critical research that associates power with abuse, dominance and inequality. Instead, ‘power is presented as an alluring network that invites stakeholders to cooperate with it’ (Kannisto 2014, p. 234; see also Cohen & Cohen 2012; Cohen, Duncan & Thulemark 2015). When power is viewed as ever-present and seductive, the subject’s own participation and agency are acknowledged, further blurring of boundaries between differentiated systems occur, and outputs show there to be more similarities than differences between them (Kannisto 2014). Power then transforms from being a constraining property of a certain actor to an enabling property of relations between actors. This is not to romanticise interactions and relations between stakeholder as an easy bed of consensus, unity and collaborations (Hall 2003; Marzano & Scott 2009). Rather, it points to social encounters being decisive in terms of access to resources and influence that moves a group through processes of intransitive policy innovation towards achievement of agreed goals (see Finding 2 - Figure 27).

Through decisive social encounters within grass roots advocacy coalitions (e.g. ARRVCF; NCDN Freedom Traveller Taskforce; DTESB Camping Options Toolkit), incremental innovation in policy discourse for freedom camping is developing among some study participants and within some policy communities. This level of change is only achieved when sustained interactions between the diverse stakeholders occurs over long periods of time. However, it is not often that such sustained interaction proceeds and even less when ‘specific political events, the current state of policy conversation and particular pressing problems align’ (Kingdon 1984, p. 111). Demonstration to the difficulty of sustainable engagement is shown through the demise of the ARRVCF after just two years and only five meetings (see Chapter 2 – Engaging the informants) and similar truncation to the efforts of NCDN’s Traveller Task Force by indirect state influence to the agenda through budgetary control (see Chapter 4 – Regional initiative in response to local government’s challenge).

However, Kingdon (2011) maintains it is possible for skilful policy entrepreneurs to groom the numerous political environments to facilitate the alignment or alternatively be more prepared and better situated to use even the smallest window of opportunity to promote a disruptive agenda. Such alignment may favour innovation to freedom camping planning and policy at various levels.
The former incremental steps foster local and regional support bolstering common solutions to common but wicked problems. The latter radical move can bring the local solutions together and promote them onto the agenda at an authoritative level of planning and decision-making, such as demonstrated by the City of Greater Geraldton in their radical move to make a public-policy difference through freedom camping (see Chapter 4 – local government test case; and, Innovative policy breakthrough). Policy entrepreneurs, according to Mintrom et al. (2014, p. 424) ‘reveal themselves through efforts to transform policy ideas into actions and hence disrupt status quo policy arrangements’ of production.

Machiavelli certainly saw room for disruption and also for conflict. He was not immune to advising his Prince on the use of force to eliminate political rivals or to coerce resistant populations. However, according to Field (2015), Machiavelli also challenged that the ultimate goal was not always to eradicate the opposed party through virtue of the existing law but to acknowledge the reasonable interests of the opponents through improved laws to the good of the political order, common good, and public freedom (Field 2015). Indeed, Machiavelli firmly defended the political power and worth of the common people. He argued, ‘that some constructive conflict is necessary for them to enjoy status and liberty in the political order’ (Field 2015) (see Chapter 4 – Regional initiative in response to local challenges). Most significantly, policy entrepreneurs emerge when they recognise through conflict the opportunity to pursue specific goals (Mintrom et al. 2014). They do so ‘through deploying their operational know-how, political capital and team building skills. They are very good at getting people from diverse settings to interact and work together’ (p. 425).

While the gains from engineered entrepreneurial activity accrue to all participants, the greatest go to those who imagine “new” ways of doing things and coordinate new factors of production accordingly. As products, particularly within the RV manufacturing sphere are changing and camping markets move into new spaces, business strategies and management systems used by the private accommodation supply sector are subject to change as well. Such changes ‘help enterprises to adapt’ to global, domestic and local societal forces (Litvaj & Stancekova 2015, p. 467). Successful adaption ‘lies in responding to and satisfying customer needs, effectively answer to their requirements and innovate, change the business and its management systems’ (p. 467).

In the flux of such change, or “resistance” (Walsh & Lipinski 2008), policy entrepreneurs realise that they are trying to change institutional thinking around dominant market-lead supply and neo-tribal culture – and they acknowledge that is never easy. They ‘typically turn to their networks to
build teams around ideas, with the resulting generation of evidence and momentum for change’ (p. 430) as has been demonstrated by successive lobbies of governments at all levels by the likes of CIAA and CMCA within the freedom camping policy arena (see Chapter 4 – The acknowledging period). Mintrom et al. (2014) acknowledge that ‘building entrepreneurial teams though is sometimes insufficient when opposition to new ideas and ventures is institutionalised or backed by strong vested interests’ (p. 431) (see Chapter 3 – Stakeholders and policy). Here the value lies in ‘forming a broad coalition of differing views to get a proposed idea over the political line … emboldening others around them to subscribe to a new vision’ and future direction (p. 431).

Quoting The Hon Robert Menzies, former and longest serving prime minister of Australia, Calderwood (2017) emphasises the policy entrepreneurs ‘role and responsibility [in politics] is to try and convince the electorate of the merits of your arguments’. Rather than presenting as a new vision, a new direction for freedom camping, recent media (Glassey 2016; Neubauer 2016) report a stark turn around for several eminent stakeholders previously adamant in political opposition to the freedom camping practice, particularly in urban environments. Theo Whitmont, president of the Caravan & Camping Industry Association (CCIA) in New South Wales, in realigning his position to now recognise the market failure, responds to consumer demand, saying:

> Vanpacking shows there is an unmet need for affordable accommodation in Australia. The tourism industry should come together to offer them an array of places to stay … All we have to do is identify land in transit corridors near coastal areas for no-frills camping.

> Honestly I don’t think this is that hard of a problem to solve … All we need is for everyone to be reasonable (Neubauer 2016).

Similarly, across the Queensland border, tourism experts are also swinging across to the other side of politics saying ‘there's one simple way to attract and benefit from the new breed of low-budget traveller; change local laws’ (Glassey 2016). According to Oasis Caravan Park operator and outgoing president of Caravan Park Association of Queensland, Majella Kahler, the caravanning and camping market is made up of:

> … a new, more self-sufficient products and local laws needed to change to be able to keep up with them. Caravans have changed and improved over the years, and so has the consumer. If some of us operators wish to go into low-cost camping, the amendments [to local laws] will make that a lot easier (Glassey 2016).

Such shifting viewpoints by outstanding entrepreneurs of the caravanning industry, both in business and politics, can quickly influence other political elites and the broader community mood. Residents, commercial industry and local governments are more disposed to supporting camping proposals that have the support of a united voice, a collaborative vision for the future of freedom camping within an overall tourism production – those with fast and sustainable pay-offs for their
communities. Glimpses of such policy entrepreneurship in freedom camping planning and policy are starting to emerge (see also Chapter 4 - The facilitating/trialling period). Entrepreneurs seeking to shift the status quo in given ways that provide pay-back to regional and local communities in areas of public and private RV camping supply. Mintrom et al. (2014) conceive politics ‘as a battle of ideas that require mastery in crafting messages that explain what you are proposing in interesting ways not burdened by jargonistic or scientific or academic ways but through broader narratives that matter to the states’ future’ (p. 431). Camping is a part of that future.

6.5.3 Envisioning a future with freedom camping

Only the implementation and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of initiatives proposed for freedom camping above (see also Chapter 3 – The facilitating/trialling period) will reveal the final outcomes and local pay-offs and consequences (both planned and unintended) of such practiced planning and policy decisions for freedom camping. On the political innovation score sheet, the “Nature” class of campground (WA) and the “Camping Options Tool Kit” (Qld), notwithstanding inherent criticisms of each, are evidence of productivity outputs in terms of proactive provision to “new” supply of freedom camping places. Both cases were state government driven initiatives with highly institutionalised departments of the state apparatus (Local Government and Communities in WA; Tourism, Events and Small Business in Qld) primarily carrying the entrepreneurial baton. In the national context of the ARRVCF and the regional context of the NCDN Freedom Traveller Taskforce each were showing promising signs in fostering constructive discourse in the “best” interests of wider community rather than vested interests by individuals or the market alone. However, both groups held only loose knit membership with low levels of institutionalism. In the local context, many local councils (again highly institutionalised) have independently shown entrepreneurial characteristics by initiating public intention to shift policy settings for caravan and camping within their individual jurisdictions (see Chapter 3 – Local government test case).

6.6 Finding 4. Power relations steer community decision-making

6.6.1 Overview

The major contribution from this finding is the presentation of a facilitating tool (model) to assist with description, critical analysis and explanation of public-policy processes in recreation, leisure and tourism studies. Ideological differences between the freedom camping stakeholders over market failure is underpinning conflict at several levels – land-use, regulation, community amenity and local government intervention:
Chapter 6: Discussion

1. Camping consumers are seeking legislative reform to facilitate freedom camping provision.
2. Commercial park operators are seeking to hold the legislative status quo to maintain their market dominance.
3. Local governments are attempting to balance economic and social amenity within their resident communities as well as being a driver of economic stimulation for community development through low-cost camping tourism.
4. State governments are awakening to freedom camping as a planning and policy issue that, well managed and integrated, can also assist their broader state-based economic agenda.

With ideology underpinning transitive conflict, and conciliation and collaboration underpinning intransitive conflict, for sustainable community development into the future, power relations emerged as the meta-theme from the data. Indicators of relational, dispositional and structural power relations were found to repetitively surface through the narrative of the study informants. Guided by the focusing lens of Dredge and Jenkin’s (2011b) conceptual framework for tourism policy studies (see Chapter 1 – Research approach), critical analysis applied to the politics of freedom camping policy in Australia found the concept of power as a pervasive force penetrating the environment in which freedom camping knowledge production is embedded, not always overt but sometimes at a more subconscious, covert or tacit manner. The force of power was not always noticeable as communities become content ‘living under the conditions of an overarching paradigm which resembles at times a non-questioned ‘second nature’” (Munar 2016, p. 3). Such “manipulated” living reflects the power of social structures and the paradox of everyday living usually conducted in controlled environments with the formulation of perceived freedom as the art of not being governed quite so much (Foucault 1984).

Conceptualisations of overarching paradigmatic power in freedom camping were presented at Chapter 3 through theories of gaze and symbolic interactionism. Such are again evident in ‘Tribe’s (2010) description of the disciplining power of “the overarching paradigm of neoliberalism”, and as also highlighted by Munar (2016, p. 3), in Jamal’s (2001) characterisation of our epoch ‘as an “entrenched paradigm” or “paradigm blockage” (neoliberalism dominance) that holds the potential and the promise of a shift towards the paradigm of sustainability’. Power as an all-pervading force influenced and shaped all stages of this thesis. Present from the project’s embryonic conceptions, my own power relations steered biases towards source inputs (participant access and data), decision-making outputs (processes, systems, instruments, resource and analysis) and outcomes (implementation, responses, and evaluation) in a continuous feed-
back-feed-forward processes. It is thus considered prudent therefore to now bring power “back in”, to locate power at the centre of a conceptual framework for tourism, recreation and leisure policy studies that looks beyond the conflict of the immediate political debate but to the regulated control of citizens of the state.

The media examples presented throughout this thesis (see Chapter 1 – Introduction; and, Chapter 4.5.3 – Local Governments’ challenge) vividly display the conflict between commercial caravan park accommodation owners and the visiting freedom campers; additional too conflicting views of and between other business owners, commercial retailers, entertainment and attraction providers and the local residents towards freedom camping per se and the freedom campers themselves. The conflict also overflows into civic areas of governance with local councils often criticised by residents and commercial caravanning interests for their action or inaction over freedom camping in public places. This multi-divergence of views reflect the changes that occur in public spaces, arising from what White (2012, p. 33) described as the ‘ebbs and flows of economic development and social conflict’.

White’s various and cogent discussions about public space, consumption and consumer society make some telling points (White 2007, 2012). According to White (2007) who was writing with reference to the social regulation of young people:

> The types of housing and amenity in a neighbourhood, the policing of street life, and different patterns of use of parks and pavements have always been symptomatic of broader social divisions and differences. Development is paramount, and commercially created places rather than publicly planned spaces have come to dominate (p.225).

White’s arguments are persuasive with respect to public space and consumption generally. He describes public space as having several demarcations according to ownership and access (see Chapter 3 – International comparisons), explains the influence of ‘institutional logic’ upon access, and cites other authors, such as the political economists David Harvey (1990) and Frank Stillwell (1993), in seeing ‘the construction of public space as a social process’ (White 2007, p. 224). Elsewhere, the social construction of public space is being dominated by the rise of consumerism (Dredge 2016; Jenkins et al. 2014; Wang 2004), the ongoing privatisation of public assets including public space (Church & Coles 2007b; McIntyre et al. 2001), and the intensification of efforts to increasingly apply different forms of social regulation to effect shifts in attitudes, behaviours, access, and use (White 2007, 2012). White (2007, p. 224) concludes ‘inevitably, conflict over uses, and between users, of public space leads to state and private attempts to regulate it’ (see Chapter 3 – The constraining period).
Reflecting upon the politics of freedom camping policy, I find the works of White (2007, 2012) and Sugden and Tomlinson (2002a) compelling. They traverse some common ground in seeking to critique and understand ‘what happens’ during contests over resources, their accessibility, their distribution, and the outcomes of these contests. Indeed, to follow their lead I was particular to further explore Sugden and Tomlinson’s (2002b) specific questions about power in sport, when applied to different camping and leisure settings: ‘What is power? Who has it and who does not? And what are the consequences of it being wielded, resisted, and reformulated’ (p. x, Preface) ‘through an informed critical gaze and a commitment to qualitative empirical research and its interpretation through a range of theoretical arguments’ (p. x, Preface). Despite the now well-developing interest in leisure and tourism policy studies a number of authors highlight a rarity of detailed frameworks for studying leisure and tourism policy; and few address the concept of, and questions surrounding power and politics (Church & Coles 2007b; Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Hall & Jenkins 1995; Metzger et al. 2016).

To further study freedom camping policy in Australia, is to study power and the politics of decision-making. The next section references phases of advancement to decision-making theories, approaches and conceptual frameworks for the study of tourism public policy reflective of specific insights obtained through the study. Such insight strengthens the proposition to bring power back to the centre of policy analysis in tourism, recreation and leisure studies.

6.6.2 The political space

The thesis reveals the existence of many complex relationships within freedom camping’s politics (see Chapter 2 - Taxonomy of caravanning: identifying determinants of RVers). Within and among a freedom camping society exists the interests and values of diverse networks; groups and personalities; the political performers signifying these interests; the institutional structures within which judgements are made; the practises of cooperation, competition and conflict that ensue; and the political conclusions that are reached. Historically, the concept of freedom has been inseparable from political action (Arendt 1993). The idea of freedom as freedom from politics she says is a notion of modern times opposed to the notion of freedom as the capacity to begin anew. This innate human condition of natality, or our nature as new beginning (Arendt 1993) is an exercise many grey nomads and baby-boomer RVers seek to experience as they retire and take to caravanning; and some to freedom camping. After many decades of constraint, through industrialised and maternal responsibilities, the new beginnings and physical presence of freedom campers often brings rise to community conflict. The transient lifestyles and behaviours of RVers
within the static communities of “others” particularly, gives rise to competition for local resources (see Chapter 4 – Diamantina Shire Council – Policy-level perspective).

To study such notions of freedom and the interactions, relationships and processes of political action it generates is also to study ‘politics as a form of struggle and policy as an outcome’ (Hall & Jenkins 2004, p. 527). On the one hand, politics is about power, who gets what, where, how and why (Hall 2007a; Lasswell 1936). On the other hand, policy, as contended by Considine (1994, p. 4) ‘is the continuing work done by groups of policy actors who use available public institutions to articulate and express the things they value’. Kingdon’s (1984) and Minstrom and Norman’s (2009, p. 649) foregrounding of ‘entrepreneurship’ as an explanation of policy change through agenda setting is also a salient point. Agenda is a term with many meanings, each relative to the context of its use. A common use is to announce, sometimes by ordered list, for instance the items within a business paper to be discussed at a meeting. Many examples appear within this thesis with reference to council meetings (see Byron Shire Council 2014a; City of Ballarat 2016; City of Greater Geraldton 2015b).

Agenda may also be a roadmap of preferred actions taken to meet certain objectives. Sometimes this map is a planning guideline or strategy, open and apparent to all engaged actors as conceived through transparent processes (i.e. Chapter 1 – Thesis aim, objectives and structure: see also Chapter 4 - Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-20). At other times the agenda is not so transparently conceived nor clear to all. It is instead a stealth action as the adopted phrase ‘hidden agenda’ suggests (Kingdon 2011, p. 3). Within the field of planning and policy, Kingdon (2011) conceives agenda as ‘the list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time’(p. 3). Thurber (2011, p. Forword) agrees:

Not until public problems, policy alternatives and political opportunities intersect is the public issue likely to achieve public agenda status or rise to an idea whose time has come.

Analysts of policy-making processes must design their own agenda (path), carefully choosing the appropriate methods of inquiry that will support inference to their findings from the limited data they can secure (see Chapter 2 – Methodology). Colebatch (2009) deliberately avoids the term policy-making, preferring instead to talk of policy activity as it is difficult to identify one authority figure as the policy-maker. Rather, this person may be just one of a number of participants within an advocacy coalition (Sabatier 1988). Many participants are responsible to other authority figures, so ‘what government wants’ becomes problematic: the question becomes ‘how do people
produce the outcomes which are described as the decision of the government’ (Colebatch 2009, p. 130) in an environment where some participants are trying to create policy on freedom camping, others are trying to prevent it, or more likely, seeking to use the opportunity to advance their own personal or market agendas.

Kingdon (1984, 2011), within his multiple streams framework offers solutions to lone-hero approaches for agenda setting through rise to the concept of the fore-mentioned policy entrepreneurs. Kingdon acknowledges potential, and all likelihood, of there being multiple entrepreneurs in any policy process. I interpret their actions as each participating in a baton relay team. The “issue” baton starts off with an identifying problem broker (entrepreneur) who passes to the policy entrepreneur. This entrepreneur is tasked with filtering or massaging choices among a range of policy alternatives before finally moving a “solutions package” onto a political entrepreneur. This entrepreneur takes carriage of the “issue-solution” package within the political (decision-maker) arena seeking to gain resolution to the package. Collectively, these strategic team builders can stimulate policy change by concentrating on team work and coalition forming at every stage of their entrepreneurial baton relay. Mintrom et al. (2014) suggests the stages are central tenants of the policy-making process. The activity focus is first and foremost on process and timing - relating the activities of different bodies to one another with stabilising practices and expectations across organisations (Colebatch 2009) - at the fortuitous time that a policy window to the political arena opens. The secondary focus is on outcome – seen as the formal authorised public statement about issue-solutions package presented (Colebatch 2009) - usually from the respective state parliament and often as response to broader focusing events (mood currents) of a national or international importance.

Currents affecting tourism could be responses to international political (in)stability and it impact upon foreign exchange rates and world parity pricing of oil for instance (see Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a). Domestically, currents may also emanate from federal and state electoral and budgetary cycles. The earlier referred ARVCF demonstrates one failed attempt within RVing to consider issues in a more inclusive forum beyond the highly engaged triad of LG, CMCA and CIAA (see Chapter 3 – Stakeholder and policy). Other more successful attempts include the state-wide consultations hosted by the Queensland Government in the formulation of the Queensland Camping Options Tool Kit and the Best-practice Guidelines for Queensland Rest Areas (see Chapter 4 - Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy 2013-20).
Notwithstanding the conceptual guidance available to this study (see Chapter 1—Research approach), Hall et al. (1997) suggest, ‘combining approaches to tourism planning’. Each can offer its ‘own set of assumptions, definitions of what the “problem” of tourism planning actually is, and related methodologies and models which help frame and “solve” research problems … and provide new insights’ (p. 261). Such integrated planning frameworks can more realistically represent the complexity of tourism development in a modern world. They are more equipped to reflect multi-dimensions of economic, sociocultural, and physical forces acting independently or simultaneously on different levels (macro, meso and micro) across time, place, space and sector. Recognising the inherently political nature of tourism, tourism studies, and tourism planning and policy, Hall and Jenkins (1995) argued there was a clear need for more innovative research that penetrated the political system or “black box” of decision-making – that is, ‘research that does more than describe the inputs and outputs of tourism planning and policy-making’ (Hall et al. 1997, p. 262). Public-policy outputs according to Hall (2011c) are the ‘formal actions taken by government’, and public-policy outcomes are ‘the effects government policy actually have’ (p. 40).

Reflecting upon inputs, outputs and outcomes, and beyond their measures and explanations, types of research, varying approaches of analysis, and ideological perspective (elitist, Marxist, public choice, and corporatist as example) of research and researchers, Burton (2006) and John (2015) focus more to public-policy theory. They summarise three distinct periods of theory building and testing: rational choice; incrementalism; and, argumentative turn. First, the classic period of rational choice with studies of “stages” decision-making rooted in positivistic description and explanation with factual evidence attempting to describe reality. Theoretically, the stages heuristic lacked issue context and historic and temporal dimensions (we know what but not why or how). Second, an age of synthesis when theories of decision-making were blended into accounts of agenda setting (multiple streams) and advocacy coalitions (John 2015).

Nested under the broad mantle of advocacy coalition framework (ACF) greater recognition was afforded generally to the wider range of political actors and bought some specific focus to the role for political entrepreneurs in the planning and policy process; particularly through agenda setting. Potential drawback of ACF is its prevalence for analysis across long political timeframes. However, it does recognises the role of focusing events or shocks or crisis that have potential to quickly shift the mood of public perception towards the problem issue. The political quip widely attributed to Winston Churchill – ‘you never want a serious crises to go to waste’ - and reiterated through the Wall Street Journal (Emanuel 2008) - acknowledges windows of opportunity that arises through sudden shifts in public mood (see Chapter 4—Recognising four periods of policy activity). Astute
policy entrepreneurs, in the multiple streams rendition, sense opening windows enabling them to promote policy choices onto the agenda putting them before decision-makers. Such entrepreneurial action improves the odds in achieving desired change in issue policy but this is not guaranteed. The third period reflects the age of comparative political economy (John 2015). He reasons that through constructivist frameworks argumentative ‘models and methods that have been applied to international relations and comparative politics are increasingly addressing public policy’ (p. 1). These are premised on discursive, socially constructed and inclusive approaches to varying degrees. To present a more detailed description, including seminal authors, critique and role of the political entrepreneur in decision-making processes is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, the differing research approaches and their foundational ideological assumptions are previously noted (see Figure 6 at Chapter 2 - Methodology), especially as their characteristics are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Rather, as Jenkins et al. (2014, p. 543; see also Ham & Hill 1984) reinforce, each does present opportunity to ‘conceptualise the policy processes in very different ways’.

Burton (2006) describes the three conceptions of the policy process by positioning them against five explanatory “elements”: key feature; role of evidence and policy research; main problem to the role: solutions to the problem and, outstanding issues. To these elements, I contend, and add, a role for policy entrepreneurs (see Table 25). In the case of tourism planning and policy, Jenkins et al. (2014) explain, ‘the diversity of perspectives is recognised with respect to studies of power and policy and decision-making (Bramwell & Meyer 2007; Church & Coles 2007a; Hall 2010; Marzano & Scott 2009) that highlight the ways in which theories can be distinguished by their level of analysis, worldview, and the methods and analytical techniques employed in studying public policy’ (p. 543). Through analysis of the politics of public policy for freedom camping, this thesis reflects upon diversity of perspectives and echoes the call of Schneider and Sidney (2009). They advocate for design theory which holds policy content as key. As a policy scholar I was able to ‘tackle the difficult questions of a policy-making culture’ in caravan and camping (p. 116). A culture ‘that has become increasingly negative, divisive and more intent on winning and permanently damaging ones enemies than on solving problems [see Chapter 4 - Industry and consumer political perspectives] or producing a more just society ... and enable public policy to become a more democratic tool’ (p. 116). Expansive to the conceptualisations of policy processes presented at Table 25, Mintrom and Norman (2009) suggest policy entrepreneurship ‘can be helpful in understanding and explanation of policy change through integration into several mainstream theorisations: Incrementalism; Punctuated Equilibrium; Multiple Streams; Institutionalism; and, Advocacy Coalitions’ (p. 655).
Table 25 - Three conceptions of the policy process
Source: Adapted from Burton 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Rational stages model</th>
<th>Advocacy coalition framework</th>
<th>Argumentative turn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key feature</td>
<td>Policy is made through a logical series of stages in which policy analysts serve legitimately elected decision-makers.</td>
<td>Policies are the product of competition among advocacy coalitions in which the rules of the game are determined by relatively stable political, social and economic structures.</td>
<td>Policies should be the product of demographic deliberation, facilitated by deliberative practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of evidence and policy research</td>
<td>Enters at every stage, from problem framing, through to solution generation and alternative testing, to retrospective evaluation. Scientific quality of evidence is crucial – stronger truth claims are more likely to be used by policy makers.</td>
<td>Evidence and ideas are associated with Advocacy Coalitions and carry weight accordingly.</td>
<td>Development of shared understanding of issues, problems and ways of solving them, facilitated by deliberative practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main problems with role</td>
<td>Research utilisation: policy makers ignore research even when its truth is accepted.</td>
<td>Finding an appropriate coalition to join or form that will promote your evidence. Intellectual standards of research quality are less significant than status associated with coalition.</td>
<td>Unequal power relations continue to allow the privileging of some perspectives. The ideal speech situation is not realised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions to problems</td>
<td>Bridge the gap between research and policy by harmonising cycles, improving specification of research, clearer presentation of findings. Improving the quality of research and its dissemination.</td>
<td>Striving to maintain objective quality standards of evidence. Becoming more entrepreneurial and aware of political realities.</td>
<td>Policy analysis continues to strive to create more equitable discursive spaces in which every viewpoint is given some respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding issues</td>
<td>Evidence continues to be used selectively and politically by policy makers.</td>
<td>Difficult to maintain commitment to quality standards in face of political realities.</td>
<td>Non-judgemental stance can also apply to methodologies considered redundant. Relativism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of policy entrepreneur</td>
<td>No role – rather, complex problems are resolved through comprehensive scientific expertise alone; an “engineered” solution rather than any form of negotiated and consensual entrepreneurial approach.</td>
<td>Maintain functioning coalition by keeping track of small victories explaining to supporters how incremental steps are taking the right direction. Undermine present policy images to create new ones emphasising major problems (leveraging from shocks and or consequences in the altered environment) and a need for change.</td>
<td>Find effective ways to present problems and solutions within the community of relevant actors who can contribute to debate on a given issue. It is possible for policy entrepreneurs to prompt change in one policy venue by first pursuing it in another.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6: Discussion

This thesis does not purport to present a treatise of each conception of the policy process, other than to acknowledge the relevance of ranging theorisations from a vast history suite and their applicability, singularly or in pragmatic combination, to an analytical examination of the politics of freedom camping policy in Australia. This section has thus only sought to present a whirlwind tour “backward” over the “classics”, the “modernist” and the “emerging” approaches to decision-making. Reflecting upon the learnings presented at Table 25, and further thinking through the purpose to analysis of and analysis for freedom camping policy, the next section informs the development of an evolved conceptual model for the study of tourism, recreation and leisure planning and policy studies which brings power back to the centre. Such an approach acknowledges concerns previously expressed by Dredge and Jamal (2015, p. 295) in that there is ‘little evidence of a clear progression in the field’ nor is there a ‘clean, neat and chronological or sequential emergence of different planning approaches and policy models that can be traced’. Rather, within ‘this highly complex knowledge domain major currents and themes cut across various decades over the span of tourism studies, specifically within the sub-field of policy planning’. Additionally acknowledged are my own views, as the researcher. These views, as Dredge and Jamal (2015) remind me, are always only ‘partial and situated, inherently a social construction influenced by biases of experience and understanding of their [my] own time-space-[sector] connections’ (p. 291) (see Chapter 1 – Researcher positionality). Trying to describe and analyse planning and policy progress in ‘structured orderly ways’, they contend ‘is creating blind spots that obscure important ideas in the knowledge domain’ (Dredge & Jamal 2015, p. 295). Hence, the concepts offered for policy studies below are presented in the understanding of their limitations as a ‘partial’ view only and some aspects will continue to remain ‘fuzzy’ while other aspects have been ‘nailed’ down more comprehensively (p. 295).

6.7 Towards an evolved framework for public-policy studies

Going beyond policy-making conceived as a process that occurs within a ‘black box’ of decision-making, a political system where ‘activities are hard to observe’ (Hill 1997, p. 25), the analysis of freedom camping planning and policy has lain open the black box to reveal the actors, influences, forces and power relations brought to bear in the process. By disentangling the policy decisions (and non-decisions) of several state and local governments across the study period (see Chapter 4 – Recognising four periods of policy activity), acknowledging the acting societal and constitutive forces, the choices made and their consequences (intended or unintended) on local communities (see Chapter 5 – Local; government engagement) has provided opportunity for exploring how issues arise on the public-policy agenda, and how they are resolved (Davis et al. 1993).
Tourism systems in general, and freedom camping more particularly, engage interests from macro to micro levels which transcend national, state and local boundaries, involve cross sector industries, multiple government departments and trigger many other contextual factors across time, place, space and sector (see Chapters 3-5). As actor or institutional interests impinge variously on analysis of and analysis for public policy, the integral nature of recursive and reflexive three-dimensional scrutiny as originally presented by Dredge and Jenkins (2007) before further refinement (see Dredge & Jenkins 2011b) became dominant through my analysis of freedom camping and its politics (see Figure 28). Rather than only pursuing analyses at different vertical levels within the freedom camping arena, data was also available from actors and agencies that function horizontally on the boundaries with other industries (e.g. transport and local government).

O’Toole (2005) and Moore (1995, p. 17) refer to managing ‘upward, downwards and outwards’ recognising the need of leaders to liaise with stakeholders internal and external to the task environment though also recognising each has its own challenges. Additionally, as events, individuals, institutions and economies transform over time, cut across function areas, and perform in different physical spaces, each foster coexistence to multiple power relations affecting entrepreneurial leadership in policy disruption and development (Blichfeldt et al. 2014). Hence, policy entrepreneurs are leaders that can skilfully recruit support from others within the context of the particular problem, policy and political spheres in pursuit of shifting the issue/policy status quo. They get their pet solution onto the political agenda and before the decision-makers. The observed combative lobbying of local, state and nationally elected MPs by CMCA and CIAA evidences their respective influence on councils and parliamentary agenda settings.

6.7.1 Locating power at the centre of tourism policy studies

As with policy change over time also comes change in frameworks for analysis of policy and analysis for policy (Ham & Hill 1984). However, as decision-makers do not act in systematic nor predictable ways such as those prescribed within the stages heuristic for instance, Howlett and Ramesh (1995, p. 12) stress ‘the practice of policy does not always follow the model’. However, though the model may bear little resemblance to the experience of policy, Howlett and Ramesh also assert, ‘if the model is further developed by being more elaborate … such a model contributes to the development of policy science [studies] by providing a much better understanding of why governments chose to do what they do or do not do’ (Howlett & Ramesh 1995, p. 14; see also Colebatch 2009, p.139). Notwithstanding the considered history of critical planning and policy thought preceding and informing this thesis (Dredge 1999, 2001a, 2006b; Dredge & Jenkins 2003a,
2003b; Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Hall 1995; Hall & Jenkins 2004; Jenkins & Hall 1993) the current analysis of the politics of freedom camping has shown there are dimensions still missing from the Dredge and Jenkins (2011b) conceptual framework offered at Chapter 1 – Research approach. I argue the amendment (see Figure 28) reflecting the outer-lying concept of “Space” broadened to reveal dimensions of “Space, Place, and Sector”. This particularly reflects the contextual findings (see Findings 1, 2 and 3) on freedom camping against the compelling argument of Williams (2002), those I feel worthy to repeat in specific justification to this tourism, recreation and leisure context:

Reconciling competing claims on a place ... is not simply a debate about which uses, meanings, and values are at stake. It also involves examining the appropriate social processes and institutions by which society orders, evaluates and decides which practices and meanings to protect and promote (p. 365).

Figure 28 - Locating power at the centre: a conceptual framework for tourism policy studies
Source: Adapted from Dredge and Jenkins 2007, p.16; 2011, p.9

Further, I firmly position the concept of ‘power’ at the centre, but in so doing recognise this concept must be clarified, particularly in respect to understanding policy-making as first, a product; second, as an outcome; third, as a response to selective interests; and finally though
importantly, as a reflection of power (Dredge & Jenkins 2011b). In undertaking this clarification, I draw broadly upon the work of seminal power theorists such as Laswell, Dahl, Lukes, Foucault, Morriss, Clegg, and Giddens for instance before turning to the more recent work of Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004), Arts et al. (2006), Church and Coles (2007a), Dredge and Jenkins (2011b) and Lukes (2015).

Arts et al. (2006) acknowledge the influence of market-based approaches embedding as new public governance concepts in policy studies – networks, governance, stakeholder discourse, interactive planning – and the dislodging of concepts such as institutional arrangements, the state, pressure and interest groups, and power. Reflecting on these changes, and with earlier observation by Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004), I agree that the shift has been significant. Indeed, in their article, *Policy and power: a conceptual framework between the ‘old’ and ‘new’ policy idioms* (p. 339), they refer to power as having become an ‘endangered species’. Coles and Church (2007b, p. 2) further ask if power is the “forgotten concept” in tourism studies as they sought ‘to place constructs of power more firmly at the centre of the agenda of critical tourism research’ through their 2007 edition *Tourism, Power and Space*. Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) also posit an argument to bring power “back in”; indeed, to strengthen the connection between tourism research and conceptualisations and theories of power; and also, to show the linkages that exist, albeit their uneven development. In consideration to these arguments, the analytical interrogation of participant voices in freedom camping’s politics and my own interpretation of the data give rise to power sub-themes of ideology, conflict and future vision in the politics of freedom camping bringing sharp focus and emphasis on power relationships (see Appendix 2.6 – The path to power). Through such critical reflection I found the argument of Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) - to bring power “back in” - particularly persuasive.

Going to further readings from the extant power literature (i.e. Elias, Hardt and Negri; Latour; Goehler; Laclau and Mouffe; Lukes, Marx, Weber; and others), inclusive of the empowerment, entanglement, knowledge, mobilisation, sources and prosecution of power (see, Church & Ravenscroft 2007; Clegg 2014; Coles & Church 2007a, 2007b; Coles & Hall 2011; Mann & Haugaard 2011) and the systems, arenas, faces, circuits, frameworks and dimensions of power (see, Clegg 1989; Dowding 2006; Haugaard 2012b; Lowi 1972, 2009), I note the argument for bringing power “back in” drills to the roots of policy studies. Lasswell and Kaplan (1950, p. 75) claimed ‘the concept of power is perhaps the most fundamental in the whole of political science: the political process is the shaping, distribution, and exercise of power’. Giddens (1984) argues ‘power cannot be
tacked on, as if it were, after the more basic concepts of social science have been formulated. There is no more elemental concept than that of power’ (p. 283).

### 6.7.2 Three layers of power – theoretical and practice perspectives

Supporting the re-developing belief that the concept of power is of utmost importance to understanding and explaining policy practices, I, along with Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) acknowledge the learnings of major theorists before me. Further, Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) draws upon work around policy arrangements (see Arts & Van Tatenhove 2000) plus specific aspects of Goehler’s (2000) theory of transitive/intransitive power (see Figure 27: Planning and policy innovation spectrum). Additionally considered are Clegg’s (1989) circuits of power and Gidden’s (1984) structuration theory to arrive at a three-layered model of power. This model, Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) suggest is supported by three facilitative concepts:

1. the concept of policy innovation: suggesting power is transitive (through struggle there is a winner and a loser) or intransitive (a policy community is benefitted).
2. the concept of policy arrangement: focusing on how agents are positioned within arrangements mediated by rules and resources associated by or within organisations.
3. the concept of political modernisation: referring to meta-discourses on governance (signification), to the “right way” of doing politics (legitimisation), and to structured asymmetries of resources (domination) (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 352).

Arts & Van Tatenhove (2004) label these three layers; relational power; dispositional power and structural power, respectively (Figure 29). In so doing they seek to further ‘understand shifts in governance on one hand and to preserve some of the relevant classical concepts on the other’ (p. 340). I found aspects of these layers of power deeply embedded in the ideologies of the informants on “market failure”, “concentrations on difference” over land tenures, legislation, and language, power games over political supremacy and “future visions” for freedom camping at all institutional levels. The interests and influences of local and regional stakeholders voiced through the local government cases, those most deeply engaged in the policy settings, were especially poignant and are exemplified through the layers of power described through Figure 29. As revealed, aspects of each layer of power were repeatedly exposed through conversation with my participants. As participants proceed through their daily routines they interact with “others” building and nurturing power relationships with their colleagues, with constituents, with support agencies, and with visitors to their communities. The relationships within these various freedom camping environments, some more constructive than others, are summarily exemplified below.
Layer 1 – Relational power focuses on the ‘achievement of policy outcomes by agents in interaction’ (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 350). This highlights power as always constituted and exerted in social relationships as noted by Goehler (2000). Such positions were present at all levels of operation and policy-making in freedom camping. For instance:

CMCA versus CIAA:

... they had their lawyer there so we had our lawyers there (Kerry, CMCA, national operations), and ... a lot of people see this as a war between free camping and caravan parks (Lillian, CIAA, national operations).

Local councils versus local councils:

You don’t get local governments to share views. Every man and his dog is going slowly in different directions, or significantly different directions (Gail, LG operations).

Local councils versus the state:

The Division [of local Government] are a mob of ..., they’re not particularly broadminded in terms of minimising red tape or working with rural councils to, to get exemptions in place. Um, they’re more bound up in (laughs) bullshit than facilitation (Gail, LG operations).

Council officers versus councillors:

Councillors can simply grandstand [over staff] to get their ‘interests’ brought to the top of the pile. There seems to be a ‘known’ way for the community in this shire to get their way, to control the council (John, LG operations).
Councillors versus councillors:

The councillor then, the councillors here seem to, you know, take that up with gusto. It gives them a sense of power or one-upmanship among their fellow councillors (John, LG operations).

There was a distinct layer of frustration expressed by informants over the unwillingness of the “other” to acknowledge, understand and coalesce to the presented “I” position (see section 3.3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” of caravanning) thus acting with the proponent to promote a shift to the status quo (A and B achieve something together) (see Figure 27). Rather, as different parties regularly referenced maintenance of the status quo, mostly for a range of market-based reasons, zero-sum games were most evident; actors demonstrating an exercise of relational power through their transient behaviour producing winners and losers to conflicted situations. This situation was particularly poignant as reflected in the “war” analogy offered by Lillian (national, operations), representing CIAA, and by Noelene (local, operational), representing the combined local governments of the New South Wales North Coast regions. Goehler (2000) differentiates exertion in respect to power games and gains. Power related to conflict-orientated zero-sum games is transitive (A achieves something at the cost of B), the result of destructive conflict so often associated with adversarial processes. Such conflict commonly involves lawyers, as is the point raised by Kerry of the CMCA (national, operational representation). In contrast, Goehler (2000) suggests that intransitive power fosters social integration and collective outcomes (A and B achieve something together), the result of constructive conflict (see Figure 27 above), exhibited by example through the initial cooperative efforts of both the CMCA and the CIAA in the formation of the ARRVCF.

The transitive and polarised positions exerted by different stakeholders in the freedom camping policy arena dominate the discourse. Such exercise of transient conflict was more visible across the cases than the few genuine examples of joined-up constructive conflict. The latter resulting from ambit claims meeting initial resistance (Walsh & Tucker 2009) but through continued negotiation (intransitive conflict) and bargaining for stable ground, achievable and acceptable goals for each or all parties were reached. One such example of joined-up constructive conflict was relayed by Brian (LG, operations) through his engagement with the Queensland Government and the 2013 Destination Q planning process:

Premier, Campbell Newman, demanded higher levels of cooperative planning from his ministers. Subsequently all relevant parties were summoned to the table and planning documents, such as the Queensland Drive Tourism Strategy, were reborn. Through this integrated planning approach the various agencies responsible for multi-layered aspects
of tourism facilitation (main roads, national parks, tourism, and planning) along with their respective ministers plus the attorney general and the premier, were all actively involved. By actively involved, I mean actually sitting at the workshop at this forum [Destination Q] and saying – ‘yes we will commit to that’

A further attempt at constructive collaborations was demonstrated in New South Wales by the NCDN through their forming of the Freedom Traveller Taskforce in 2015. By cobbling together the ideas and values of 21 local governments along with those of associated industry and agency support institutions the Taskforce hoped to show, despite the boundaries between the multiple stakeholders blurred in so many different ways, there were in fact more similarities than difference between them. Noelle (LG, operational) acknowledged ‘freedom camping is a complex problem and definitely a tricky issue but I am confident that a policy solution can be found to satisfy both transient travellers and local businesses’. Noelle was confident the Taskforce could harness the similarities and negotiate the differences to enable higher production in caravanning and particularly freedom camping in NSW, as exhibited, for example, through the initial cooperative efforts of both CMCA and the CIAA in the formation of the ARRVCF.

Layer 2 – Dispositional power focuses ‘positioning agents in arrangements mediated by rules and resources’ (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 350) where organisational rules define and legitimate the allocative and authoritative resources. Local governments’ power in freedom camping regulation is bound by statutes of state parliament. The Local Government Act provides councils the level of autonomy to govern and the legitimacy and authority required to make public policy. However, it also places constraints on their capacity and prescribes the manner, top-down or bottom-up, in which they must act:

As officers we are simply duty bound in just rearticulating the status quo. The status quo being that there was existing legislation [top-down] under Section 68 of the Local Government Act for people wanting to set up a primitive camping ground. They have to apply for approval through Council so there’s a legislative basis I guess to what we do (Kath, state, operations).

And, conversely:

In light of the lack of state direction, or even guidance, there is no option but to take our policy cue ultimately from the elected councillors [bottom-up]. The policy, via resolution comes up from Council to us and we’re charged with the responsibility of implementing that policy – we are merely the enforcement line (John, LG operations).

The nature of constraint experienced by Kath and John reflect the disjuncture between societal position (state legislation) and societies practice (local experience). That is, dispositional power shapes the ‘agency’s capacity to act’ (Clegg 1989, p. 84).
Layer 3 – Structural power focuses on ‘configuring arrangements mediated by orders of significance, domination and legitimisation’, reinforcing ‘the conduct of agents as shaped by societal structures and discourses’ (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 350). That is, collective agents (institutions) give meaning to the social world (Giddens 1984). These macro influences help to determine what activity a society considers legitimate and why others are not (see Chapter 4 – The constraining period; and, The enabling period) thus constraining or enabling the mobilisation of resources. In freedom camping, Grace (State, operations) articulates her view that the act of camping is not a manifestation of real freedom because society has some rules:

Everyone works with those rules and ... we’re not into anarchy ... it has to be controlled. See that’s why you can’t go and build your house or park your RV wherever you want. You can’t go and do anything wherever you want. There are rules ... you can’t start a business unless you get the right licences. There are certain things that just makes society ...the way society is. So I think in the absence of rules the world would be a horrible place. So I don’t think anyone’s advocating to say “let’s get rid of all levels of government and all restrictions and we’ll just run around doing what we want”. That’s not right. So we have to accept that there are boundaries and that there are regulations and that businesses and every society needs to operate within the rules.

Such ‘rule’ gaps are highlighted by CIAA nationally as the “un-level playing field”. ‘We have been fractionised in the past and there is a lot of loose language floating in the marketplace ... consumer groups [CMCA] use this to their advantage’ (Coventry 2015, pp. 12-13) to lobby councils for more freedom camping places. Similarly, Patricia (State, operations), for CIAA member CQ, further explains the compliance issues, reiterating QC had absolutely no objection to freedom camping. Rather, according to Patricia, their objection was to local councils as regulatory institutions providing unregulated (non-compliant) camping sites. This, she believes, is opening up risk to the environment, to the rate-paying public, and to the camping consumer. Patricia was steadfast in defending QC’s non-sympathetic position on freedom camping provisions by local government. She felt that camping places developed by councils should first adhere to their own regulatory requirements and that any future developments should also meet the regulations of the day. Patricia was intimating that CMCA is lobbying for regulations less than that expected of commercial camp ground operators. Arts and Van Tatenhove (2004, p. 351) remind that ‘structures, orders and institutions cannot act, nor do they mechanically determine the conduct of agents’. However, they ‘affect human conduct through human conduct’ thus structural power ‘exists’ (italics in original). ‘Structures are inextricably linked to human action, ‘albeit indirectly and in a distantiated time-space context’ (p. 351). The structures binding freedom camping and its exhibited behaviours are demonstrated as breaking down and creating the gap that freedom camping exploits.
6.8 Scenario building for future camping supply

The findings from this study suggest that there is opportunity to more decisively investigate implications of broadening the legislative frame “around” caravanning regulations to bring the private sector sustainably “back in” to the low-cost camping supply chain. This can only be achieved when the regulatory burden on the private sector (red and green tape) is reconsidered by the respective state governments. Introduction of amended legislation, that which can better accommodate overnight “Kiosk Parking” for self-contained RVs (European Stellplatz style) through dedicated policy is a potential scenario to explore. Figure 30a-g, without offering any warranty of regulatory compliance, displays optional designs and configurations of “Kiosk Parking” specifically catering to the “self-contained” RV camper market (see also Chapter 3 – International comparisons) though such venues can be tailored to lesser (non) contained markets also. Such parking spaces with adequate, but made-to-market, amenities would incur a lesser regulatory burden for existing commercial operators and also present as a more attractive “entry” opportunity for new supply. Such overnight parking, initially for self-contained RVs, presents as an opportunity worth formally trialling in Australia. Such trials would assist destination managers (councils) in the evaluation of and potential for future camping supply provision, particularly for self-contained RVs.

Parallel innovations in amenities are not so prevalent in the Australian land-based infrastructure for camping, particularly within current commercial supply options (Brooker & Joppe 2014; Brooker et al. 2012). Manufacturers continue to innovate thereby closing the vehicle choice supply gap (matching experience demands) but this still leaves land-based site supply gaps. Initially the vehicle-based innovations came through self-containment technologies but more recently through RVs with greater four-wheel-drive capabilities (caravancampingsales 2016; Cropp 2016d; Kimberley Kruisers 2016) and utilising contemporary communication tools (Quasius 2017; Stock 2016). Evidence abounds where RV manufacturers have been quick to respond to RV consumer demands for new technologies within vehicles and they will surely continue to explore further futuristic RV prototypes, inclusive of integrated though detachable vehicle and accommodation options, multi-storey configurations and driverless technologies (Figure 31). Non-self-contained vehicles could also be catered for through separate “Kiosk” style overnight parking arrangements with variation to physical amenity, accompanying regulation, entry price-points, fee collection mechanisms (boom-gated or not) and/or services technology platforms (Figure 32).
Figure 30 - Variously configured Kiosk/Stellplatz style parking designs
Source: Author
Figure 31 - Futuristic recreational vehicle prototypes
Source: Author
Figure 32 - Variously sophisticated check-in Kiosks with water and waste points
Source: Author
The new innovations allow the camping consumer to engage further with their own brand of “freedom” within the RVing leisure and mobile-resident worlds (Caldicott et al. 2017a). The lead of the RV manufacturing sector, coupled with increasing lobbying by camping consumers to government, is already showing trends toward increased local government engagement with alternate camping mode options – those beyond existing legislative provision. Envisaging a future for freedom camping, the findings of this study suggest that the current demand is on trend to further force site supply reform through legislative development for low-cost provision. Such low-cost camping place options need not be in competition or as substitute to existing legislation and the prescriptions they well-deliver for some commercial operators and some segments of the RV market. Rather, the current legislation requires an amendment to make two all-important new provisions.

The first provision is to support exiting caravan park operators, particularly those that can no longer meet or afford current legislative compliance, to switch part or all of their property to low-cost supply, and further to make way for “new” entrants to the supply market. This notion accords broadly with the principles of (Butler 1980) tourist area lifecycle (TALC), and specifically with the caravan park life cycle model presented by Caldicott and Scherrer (2013a). Market forces have, to date, propelled caravan parks to their current stage of the TALC. However, the path to a sustainable future for Australian caravan parks will be determined through their own proactive management intervention. Such intervention, and calculated entrepreneurial risk-taking through new investment, will determine the future for the rejuvenation of aging, and in some instances non-compliant, caravan parks. Caldicott and Scherrer (2013a) raised the flag to the need for a variety of individual site amenities such as drive-through sites catering to larger RVs and motorhomes with an expectation that parks adapt to users of new forms of mobile accommodation. This study demonstrates that continued promotion of caravanning by the CIAA and strengthening RV sales delivered by RVMAA members is buoying the existing, emerging and experimenting consumer markets. A rejuvenated phase of caravanning, and its associated legislations, will most certainly evolve across Australia to support new specialised caravan park developments and new “freedom” site-mix opportunities. Furthermore, additional segmentation of markets may also develop as commercial park owners and managers seek out “futuristic” special interest opportunities (see also Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b).

In the short-term, freedom camping is developing through secondary use sites, those alternate to commercial sites, for example showgrounds, race tracks and sports fields (Neubauer 2016), modified site use at highway service centres, clubs, casinos and shopping centre carparks (Kitt
2017; Pilot Flying J 2016), and provisions for park-over property (POP) such as private rural lands or urban driveways (Cropp 2016b; France Passion 2016; Parkable 2016; Youcamp.com 2015). In the long-term, freedom camping provision is anticipated to grow through permanent and partial re-zoning of commercial caravan parks over to low-cost provision for “self-contained camping”. Each option, each with lesser regulation, and importantly lesser compliance cost, affords potential to keep the commercial operation viable (see also Gilbert 2013; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004 re park sustainability) through the modern servicing of “new” markets within ever-changing operational environments.

The second provision is to support fully Greenfield site developments (or Brownfield site redevelopment) delivering variously configured Kiosk/Stellplatz style parking spaces. These may each have varying levels of amenity, also regulated for safety and environmental protection, but only to the degree of match between supply and demand for both self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles. Such a product category is found as undersupplied in Australia within a broad legislative framework found to be lacking in flexibility:

The response to the tendered large levels of non-compliance camping on Crown land surely means that the law is ineffective and that a different approach must be taken, and one of the solutions to this [freedom camping] issue is to provide more approved camping facilities (Economics and Industry Standing Committee 2009, pp. 320-321).

The blanket legislative approach to caravan and camping currently interpreted by local council planners and imposed upon commercial operators in Australia, along with its associated high site-provision costs, is also confronted by entrepreneurial attempts at new supply entry (see also Chapter 3 – Innovative policy breakthrough). This current constraining model of legislative and business practice is demonstrated to be broken.

### 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter draws together the findings from those preceding to offer a potential future path for caravan and camping in Australia through planning and policy amendment. Such suggestions are by no means exclusive. They are tendered as useful foundations only, to promote dialogue and allow policy makers to consider same within any wider suite of scenarios. Those that scope future provision for increased, affordable and innovative camping supply will endure. The chapter also informs incremental adjustment to a conceptual framework for the analysis of public policy. The evolved policy studies framework acknowledges the considered history and intellectual thought of previous scholars pertaining to theories of power in planning and policy though it re-positions and re-purposes power at the centre. This recognises the fundamental place of power in the social
Chapter 6: Discussion

sciences broadly and the study of planning and policy for tourism, recreation and leisure studies in particular.

The mobility of freedom camping was highlighted through a discourse on contests of place. This showed how social processes and interpretations by which society orders, evaluates and decides which practices and meanings to protect and promote manifest through the politics of place. Relationships between power and politics within frameworks for studying leisure and tourism policy were considered with specific reference to power. Additionally, the relationships between policy participants in governing freedom camping were shown to exhibit characteristics highly power dependent with policy actors negotiating their way through policy environments, arenas, and specific policy issues.

Notwithstanding the prior ideological baggage that comes with the considered history of intellectual thought supporting the study of public policy, the field is now incrementally advanced through introduction to the power centric approach to tourism and leisure studies. Rather than abandoning the respected insights of my peers it is contended that to develop a theory of public-policy analysis it is possible, indeed desirable, to predicate same upon existing foundations (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Osborne 2006). Hence the evolved “power centric” model (see Figure 28 above) continues to support the plurality of new public governance. It retains recognition of multiple inter-dependent actors contributing to the delivery of public and community services in a ‘plural state’ and the multiple processes informing the policy-making system of the ‘pluralist state’ (Osborne 2006, p. 384). The model, firmly founded in seminal public-policy theories generally, and pressure groups, power, governance and institutions of the state specifically (see Chapters 3, 4 and 5), is therefore not a substitute but rather an alternative within the field of public-policy analysis for tourism, recreation and leisure studies.

To study power, particularly within the context of tourism recreation and leisure, is important because of its practical, moral and evaluative contexts (Morris 1987). Knowing practically how things are brought about gives rise to the extent of an agent’s power: through assessment moral responsibility for the use of power can be attributed; and, interest can move beyond the judgement of individuals to an evaluation of society (Bartels et al. 2015; Mechem 1906; Morris 1987). It gives rise to the distribution of power within society and the degree to which the population’s interests and expectations are met (Coles & Church 2007b; Hall 2011c; Morris 1987),. According to Richter (1989, p. 210) studying tourism policy is more than a way of comparing strategies of tourism development:
.... it is also a way of exploring local, national and international politics, and examining strengths and weaknesses in the policy process of various societies; it is a way of studying political culture and social values and accessing theories of development and ideological assumptions; it is also a way of dissecting the actual as opposed to the rhetorical freedom of manoeuvre of individuals [self] and groups [others] within the political process.

Further, Foucault (1987, p. 11) suggests ‘the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion by the practices of self’. These practices are not invented by individuals, but are derived from ‘patterns that he finds in culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group [neo-tribal]’. Lukes (2005) finds no surprise in Foucault’s assessment. Rather, he says ‘individuals are socialised: they are orientated to roles and practices that are culturally and socially given; they internalise these and may experience them as freely chosen; indeed, their freedom may be the fruit of regulation – outcomes of discipline and controls’ (p. 97). I find such assessment accords with gaze theory and the principles of symbolic interactionism, social connectedness and the practice specialisation theories acknowledged in underpinning foundations to the development of the taxonomy of caravanning (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” of caravanning).

In seeking to operationalise the concepts of power, Hall (2011c, p. 49) arrived ‘at the importance of locating issues of power within particular issues and locational contexts, even though acknowledging that such loci of power relations will be connected to the myriad of other issues and sets of interests’. Hall (2011c, p. 49) citing Cheong and Millar (2000) concludes the value of the Lukesian approach to power is:

...highlighted in the multi-layering of observations of power in three dimension in that it provides an empirical strength often missing in Foucautian analyses which, while they acknowledge the role of structural dominance, often fail to record the actions of individual actors in relation to specific issues and interests.

This leads me to progress the considered thoughts of Hall (2011c) and Cheong and Millar (2000), to further reflect on the ‘substantial amount of writing in tourism where authors have extorted the notion of a tourist gaze without interrogation of the concepts of power and knowledge on which it is grounded and given little thought to the role that individual actors play with respect to power relations from a decision-making and non-decision-making perspective’ (p. 49). In the wake of such criticisms and particularly through the taxonomy with its conceptual roots within gaze and interactionalism theory (see Chapter 3), this thesis makes small but original claims in reducing that gap. Recognising these incremental contributions as not insignificant, it must be qualified in relation to how “I”, as the researcher, fit into the networks and structures of power and their
associated relationships (see Chapter 1 – Researcher positionality). Reflecting further upon concepts of positionality, as researchers we must not be afraid to locate ourselves in the power relationships. This reinforces the necessary to know ourselves and ask questions of ourselves: ‘for whom do we work, whose interests are served by our explanations of the world; what questions do we include and what questions to exclude in order to focus on those interests?’ (Hall 2011b, p. 51; see also Foote & Gau Bartell 2011). In so doing, recognition is given to the consequences of acceptance (constitutive forces) or non-acceptance (resistive forces) to the approach, outputs and outcomes by some individuals and institutions (Dredge & Jamal 2015; Foucault 2002; Hall 2011b). It also reinforces the notion that at certain places, times and within certain sectors the social construction of the research and its multiple modes of communication will “crudely” seem to serve some interests and not others; winners and losers with the gains made by winners apparently at the direct expense of the losers (Giddens 1968; Haugaard 2012a; Lukes 2015; Parsons 1963).

As knowledge is gained through this thesis, “new” power is created. However, it doesn’t just exist, but is a product of social interaction (Blumer 1969; Bowen et al. 2016; Haugaard 2002; Tribe 2010; Urry 2000). Its creation is a function of context and relationships between “other” freedom camping agents and myself as ‘power is exercised every time a group or individual is dependent upon someone else for carrying out a role or task’ (Hall 2011c, p. 42). Each exercise of power forms new systems of cooperation, conflict, or attempts to influence outcomes (Bowen et al. 2016), particularly the research agenda (see example with Chapter 1 – Researcher positionality) and the way evidence is collected, interpreted and communicated (see Chapter2 – Data interpretation, member checking and public feedback). Evidence, according to Morse (2006, p. 395) ‘is something that is concrete and indisputable, whereas [the] politics [of evidence] refers to “activities concerned with the...exercise of authority [and power]”’ (see also Larner 2004).

Possibility exists that the gains made through this thesis simply feed forward and contribute to new rounds of negotiations and persuasive discourses between actors, organisations, governments (or their agents) and researchers. It recognises that the powerful need not be at the expense of the less powerful. Rather, in understanding the “other” (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” in caravanning), and echoing Church and Coles (2007, p. 177) ‘requires us to continually reflect upon our changing positionality and maintain a critical perspective on [the research] process’. The processes that sought to subsume me into the conflicts and power relations are central to maintaining caravanning as a productive and sustainable supply in Australia and a seamless experience for the current and future RV tourists, mobile life-style
residents and product and place suppliers. It is posited that to achieve such sustainability is to close the market gap in current freedom camping supply facilitated through intransitive policy innovation.

This study of the politics of freedom camping policy in Australia - policy-making, planning and management implications for local communities - provides new knowledge in the hope of bringing new levels of inspiration and aspiration to existing and future policy actors (decision-makers) in pursuit of new social realities for caravanning in Australia. Again, to emulate Foucault:

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault 1991, p. 194).

The connection between tourism, power, time, space and sector was acknowledged by John Urry (2002) in discussing the consequences of being the subject of the gaze. Urry sought to link ‘tourism to the emergence of disciplining norms and othering in capital society’ (Church & Coles 2007a, p. 277). Urry also notes that planning and policy outputs and outcomes will depend upon various determinants such as the relations of power within the “host” community, the time-space characteristics of visitors and the kinds of gaze involved’ (Urry 2002, p. 151). Church and Coles (2007a) reinforce how many faces of power manifest in tourism. Even though tourism conglomerates [commercial operators, associations or governments] are ‘often not visibly present in the material sites of tourism [freedom camping]... their use of management systems, business networks, signs, symbols and infrastructures of tourism allows them to have a major influence on the use of “distant” sites’ (p. 277).

The source of power therefore plays a significant role in tourism, recreation and leisure practices. Urry’s “tourist gaze”, though not without reproach, was directly influenced by Foucault’s examination of the regulating gaze in medical and penal systems (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” in caravanning). The tourist gaze is considered by some as the key to moving forward the exploration of power in tourism so as to emphasise the centrality of the tourist rather than the state, other institutions or systemic power relations (Coles & Church 2007b; Gurkan 2008; Urry 2002). This thesis shows (paraphrasing Aitchison 2001; Coles & Church 2007b; Craik 1991) how the symbols, signs and sites of freedom camping contribute to influential discourses that have contrasting effects on power relations, material and symbolic “otherings” of certain social, business and political groups engaged with freedom camping.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Introducing this thesis, Chapter 1 unveiled the uneasy situation brewing between freedom camping stakeholders across Australia, and particularly focused upon the unrest apparent in the cross-border region of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland. Newspaper, social media and television reports sensationalising the practice of street camping, and the contested use of public places, spaces and resources, brought the feelings of campers (some with their dogs), caravan park owners, and community residents directly into my northern New South Wales living room. The local media on the North Coast of NSW was awash with stories of commercial caravan park operators angry with the hordes of “freeloading” freedom campers purportedly “stealing” their way around the country by avoiding the payment of accommodation fees. The campers hit back, defending their claimed democratic right to choose where they camp and to choose where and how they spend their travel dollar. Campers threatened to boycott towns and regions that did not share their principles of freedom of choice nor value their considerable camper spend. Park operators’ threatened that fiscal closure of parks would occur if unfair practices were allowed to continue, predominately attacking councils with loose regulatory controls. Each stakeholder group, using their respective power, attempt to influence government agenda setting and decision making.

The executive officer (EO) of the NCDN told News ABC that the regional tourism organisation was looking to strike the right balance between the “warring” parties (Lowrey 2014). Tourism authorities were working with councils across the North Coast to develop a consistent strategy for handling the growing number of RVs travelling the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane. Lowrey (2014) quotes the EO saying:

    There needs to be quite a bit of work done. We want to make sure that we have the right facilities and that we’re able to promote our holiday parks, and what they have to offer, as well as making sure that we’re providing free [freedom] camping that is [also] of interest to the RV market.

The NCDN acknowledged that freedom camping was a complex problem but they were confident in stating their position that a policy solution ‘can be found to satisfy both travellers and businesses. It is definitely a tricky one’ (see Lowrey 2014).
As also outlined through Chapter 1 and the study objectives, this thesis investigated the public-policy processes concerning freedom camping in Australia generally and in the states of New South Wales and Queensland specifically. An evidence based and grounded approach was adopted to understanding the politics of decision-making processes for freedom camping at a community level. Critical analysis was applied to the voice of policy participants and pressure group representatives. Their relative power streams and relationship with governance arrangements were examined (Section 6.3.2). The analysis unravelled the values and interests of individual and agencies involved in the freedom camping political arena and how these have intersected with institutions of the state (Section 6.4.2).

This concluding chapter draws together the findings from that unravelling, demonstrating how the synthesis of knowledge gained from the investigations at each of three levels – international, domestic, and local (see Chapters 3-5) - addresses the three specific objectives in support to the general aim of the study. More broadly, the study extends the lessons of freedom camping public-policy analysis into a wider context of tourism, leisure and recreation studies. The remainder of the chapter presents across five sections. Section 7.2 discusses the findings in terms of new and still emerging knowledge that each objective sought to uncover. Section 7.3 reflects upon the research findings and their implications for tourism studies. Section 7.4 reflects upon the contributions of the research and responds to limitations of this thesis and identifies direction for further inquiry. Finally, section 7.4 concludes the thesis.

7.2 Alignment of findings with objectives

To establish awareness, both in understanding the “other” of caravanning and in decision-making processes surrounding freedom camping planning and policy, particularly the politics thereof in Australia, three specific research objectives were actioned. To obtain and analyse reliable information through this study it was important for me to become aware of the variation in camper characteristics and preferences, some of the underlying causes of this variance and its effect on future management of freedom camping. In considering the relevance of this research and the future of freedom camping as a valued component of tourism supply, I was reminded of the 1969 findings of one Elwood L Shafer Jr. Shafer published a report in the US titled - The average camper who doesn’t exist. Following his survey undertaken at five New York State campgrounds Shafer wrote:

If you study campers by sampling at random at several campgrounds, you may find that your data describe an ‘average’ camper who simply does not exist. Such information is
not good enough for recreation planners who need reliable information for making decisions (p. 1).

The following sections therefore discusses the findings of my study in terms of the new and emergent knowledge brought to bear from each objective to produce reliable information for planning and policy decision-makers. As the nature of public-policy analysis is complex and recursive the findings within this section are necessarily interrelated. The discussion below, objective by objective, accepts the overlaps that such interrelations present.

**Objective 1.** To develop a conceptual taxonomy to aid international understanding of freedom camping and understanding of the “other” within contemporary caravanning.

Unravelled through Chapter 3, this objective placed freedom camping in Australia within an international context. It explains some of the overlapping, conflicting and mischievous language and terms that invite power games, confusion and anxiety to the politics of freedom camping - not only for practitioners and students of freedom camping management but also to policy decision-makers. Through the development of the taxonomy, the language common to caravanning interests was found to conflate prejudices, suspicions, distrust, and agenda setting within the planning and policy arena. The caravan industry’s own jargon presents an amalgamation of poorly-defined terms and establishment of expressions that are confused and often ambiguous. Talking to *Inside Tourism*’s Nigel Coventry (2015), the CEO of Caravan Industry Association Australia (CIAA) says ‘we have been fractionised in the past and there is a lot of loose language floating in the marketplace ... consumer groups use this to their advantage (pp. 12-13).

In addition, the parallel naivety of homogenising freedom campers into a single broad caravanning subset all add to the melee. Following the sound advice of Elwood L Shafer Jr., this thesis recognised the highly heterogeneous nature of freedom camping and freedom campers and proposed the taxonomy in acknowledgement of the micro to macro identifying determinants helping to shape freedom camping via neo-tribes (e.g. grey nomads, vanpackers, short-term tourist, life-time nomads). Though very different in some respects and thus in definition (see Appendix 1.5 – Camping market segments), the neo-tribes also displayed some commonalities. First, the choice of travellers to use an RV as a form of accommodation; second, the choice of vehicle itself; and third, the choice of site, or camping space to match the experience and identity desired; are all *deliberate* choices. Freedom camping is not a haphazard by-product of mainstream tourism. It is a deliberate action of choice. For some campers it is a life-style, for others freedom camping is taken as protest to everyday living conducted in controlled environments. As modern
day travellers, freedom campers continue to seek both the exhilaration of breaking away from the rigour of the identities performed in the sedentary world while looking for emotional bonding to be found through the mobility of their RVing neo-tribe communities. It’s about freedom of choice for freedom campers – the freedom to choose the constraints that they are prepared to accept. That is to take a critical distance to the type of subjectification that is linked to the state ... the dominant subject positions (Foucault 2002). The key demands that drive an RVer’s utopian ideals are a keen sense of their own power, to take charge of their own lives and destiny, building self-reliance and independence. By exercising their expressions of freedom within a regulated society some campers swing like a pendulum, metaphorically speaking, as they move fluidly in and out of their neo-tribe and also across the liminal bounds between commercial and freedom accommodation zones. As ‘swingers’, sometimes they freedom camp and sometimes they commercial camp maximising the inherent values that each mode provides (Caldicott et al. 2014b, p. 425). This pendulum effect is demonstrated through Figure 33.

Figure 33 - Pendulum of camping space preferences
Source: Author
Chapter 7 - Conclusion

Freedom campers value private and personal camping space and reject centralisation, especially the power of dominant models of commercial park-based commodification. As demonstrated through Chapter 3 - Shifts in camping behaviour, campers engage in alternative use spaces which facilitate and satisfy their desires for self-creativity, self-sufficiency, self-containment, and public rejection all at the same time, crafting the contest of that space. As the demand for freedom spaces grow, in line with current and projected RV sales growth (CIAA 2015a, 2015h, 2015i) history shows that new modes of camping space will continue to incubate. Total volume of campers across each camping mode option will also rise while ever the RV sales growth continues. However, the percentage of market share for each mode, distinct from that known today, i.e. commercial (34%), freedom (16%), and swingers (50%) (Caldicott et al. 2014b), will also continue to fluctuate in line with societal influences and individual preference.

In the absence of commonly accepted definitions for much of the caravanning jargon my approach through the taxonomy was to present clarity and specificity to demystify the jargon of caravanning. The taxonomy is supported by the glossary (see Appendix 1.1) and complementary description and discourse on RV styles, freedom camping terms, camping spaces and market segments (see Appendices 1.2 to 1.5). These tools seek to make clear the terms and language used within this thesis but also promote opportunity for common acceptance of same among stakeholders; specificity among camping consumers, practitioners, policy makers and academia.

The thesis recognises the substantial differences in campers and the confusion over their camping practice all generically labelled as caravanning and more recently as RVing\(^\text{15}\). It thus addresses Southerton et al.’s (2003) call for further theoretical analysis and empirical investigation into issues of caravanning. The process of clarifying the language confusion alone presented opportunity for practical and theoretical advancement of the caravanning literature more broadly, but particularly to the thin policy and planning streams. The thesis further supports Rittel and Webber’s (1973) approach that suggests planning, by ‘wicked’ design, is an argumentative process in the course of which ‘an image of the problem and of the solution emerges gradually among the participants as a product of incessant judgement, subjected to critical argument’ (p. 162). To follow this line I found it useful to critique the historical development of freedom camping through a legislative lens.

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\(^{15}\) Although this thesis purposefully interchanges the terms caravanning and RVing to breakdown stereotypes, the distinction between caravans and motorhomes is still drawn in Europe, particularly around the use of Stellplatz parking sites. Caravans are not permitted to use a Stellplatz.
Objective 2. To explain the legislative developments of freedom camping in Australia focusing particularly to historic and contemporary elements of supply and demand, since Federation (1900) generally and auto-mobilisation particularly.

Explained through Chapter 4, this objective traced a modern chronological history of freedom camping in Australia within the frame of specific legislations, legislative periods and critical turning points. Each helped to shape the phenomenon and its development along praxis and policy paths. Introduced through the political positioning and conceptualisation of freedom camping across four time periods the legislative review is anchored to the beginning of the 20th Century; 1900 and the Federation of the Australian Commonwealth. The concurrent rise to a motorised society in this new Century also symbolises, by definition (see Chapter 1 - Setting the problem) the birth of freedom camping in colonised Australia as an automotive dependent practice, though historically steeped in pre-automobile, travelling stock route (Hawkins 2014b) and indigenous songlines (Chatwin 1987) folklore. The four time periods of enabling, constraining, acknowledging and facilitating/trialling demonstrated the significance of societal pressures and ways that it influenced incremental legislative reform. As some campers prefer to do their “own thing” they stay away from the “madding crowd” (Hardy 1874), finding their own meaning of freedom. They express their desires for not being herded and fenced into caravan parks, like sheep along the stock route, against their will (Warren & Hay 2009). Rather, they express strong penchants for ‘the non-interference with the realisation of their preferences’ (Lukes 2005, p. 114).

Political actions and inactions described at federal, state and local government levels demonstrate both the symbiotic nexus between each but also the barriers that arise through fractures and inconsistencies between government level interfaces – the policy disjunct of a Federated state. Specifically, critical review of seven state-level tourism inquiries show these to have been influenced by past and current freedom camping practice. Subsequently, future freedom camping practice will be guided through the outcomes and recommendations of those inquiries coupled with public policy studies such as this thesis and also future societal pressures. While the independent inquiries were not specifically targeting freedom camping, evidence variously given through the public hearings showed that freedom camping was certainly the “elephant in the room” (Denzin 2009), a difficult problem known to inquiry audiences though still apparently invisible and one not adequately being addressed. In light of the multiple parliamentary inquiries the political divide between “sides” of the caravanning industry – commercial site suppliers, freedom camping consumers, and local government regulators – could no longer be ignored by
the state. Freedom camping can no longer be perceived invisible - it is ‘an intruder whose presence could [can] no longer be ignored’ (p. 139).

Chapter 4 additionally described the political processes unfolding around Australia through multiple experiences at the local community level. More significantly though, is how these reoccurring local focusing events and processes accumulatively fed the first piece of state legislation in this Century that prioritises and accommodates the unique circumstances of freedom camping at an infrastructure and legislative level (see Chapter 4 – Discussion). This recognition was enshrined through release of the Nature-based Park Licensing Guidelines for developers and governments in Western Australia. The guidelines set an ominous precedent for other states and territories, particularly those seeking to gain a degree of political expedience through policy transfer (see Duncan 2009; Page & Mark-Lawson 2007). The Nature-park licensing acknowledges and replies to the changing social, economic, technological, and political environments to which freedom camping is a practice response. This single piece of policy work enacted in December 2015 stands-alone as a significant turning point in a state government’s comprehension and candour of the freedom camping market. It signals real-time readjustment to traditional caravanning policy development nationwide. It brings into legislation much of the intent behind the non-statutory Queensland guidelines introduced 12 months earlier through the 2014 Camping Options Toolkit.

In respect to wider legislative reform, the four time periods conceptualised through Chapter 4, each with shortening timeframes, reinforce patterns of punctuated equilibrium as described by Baumgartner and Jones (1993). That is, quite long periods of incremental policy-making are followed by periods of deep and rapid change before the balance is restored through longer periods of policy calm. This is not to say there is policy dormancy in the calm, but rather it patterns reflective time for evaluation and response to unconsidered societal consequences of the policy adjustment. Each provide windows for new and developing pressures which build to trigger future turning points in political history.

Objective 3. To critically analyse how local government, particularly in the states of Queensland and New South Wales, perceives, interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping with reference to public-policy theory.

Through Chapter 5, this final objective exposed the plan, path, practice, consequences and evaluation of policy-making for freedom camping at local level generally, and more specifically
within four distinct local government areas of New South Wales and Queensland. By this stage of
the study I was acutely mindful of significant shifts in RV supply and demand capabilities observed
to have developed within the past three decades, from 1986 in particular. This is when Ordinance
71 was introduced through the NSW Local Government Act making permanent caravan park living
legal in NSW and a position successively adopted in other states. Analysis of the previous two
objectives bore witnessed to such introduced legislations, regulations and guidelines variously
subject to impact the RV industry generally and the evolved social, environmental and political
values in RV communities more specifically.

The influence of such legislative reforms, of societal structures, and local community discourse
was evident through each informant conversation but particularly poignant with the mayors of
each LGA. They strongly reflected the expectations of their respective communities. What was
acceptable? How was freedom camping valued? What was similar and what was different among
them? The personal dispositions towards freedom camping revealed by each of the elected local
government informants did not show them to whole-heartedly discriminate against the practice.
However, those mayors most sympathetic to the freedom campers had expressed positive
personal freedom camping experiences; away from their local government areas and outside of
their local government civic roles. Even so, the public distain towards anti-social aspects of the
activity as voiced more particularly by the eastern communities (i.e. Byron Bay and Boonah) was
in contrast to the appreciation to the economic contribution brought through freedom camping
as expressed in the mayors of the western LGAs (i.e. Lightning Ridge and Birdsville).

The general ‘care factor’ (Gail, LG operations) towards freedom camping was evenly distributed
across the east-west, coastal to desert, spread of councils (see Chapter 5 – Figure 20). However,
each did present different attributes for political conversation. These ranged from the need to
totally uphold existing legislations that protected the community’s values and norms in a
traditional market sense to fully exploring opportunities to accommodate the new markets in
socially, culturally and economically accepted ways and spaces. The common thread between
each was expressed as a cautious need to monitor the situation as the number of freedom
campers grows and communities head towards thresholds that would trigger further focusing
events requiring more serious planning and policy conversations. Such cautious optimism
demonstrates how the macro society, as an intangible entity, cannot itself act upon the issues of
freedom camping. Nevertheless, its influence as transmitted through tangible human interaction,
engagement, and relationships, was shown to bring layers of relational, dispositional and
structural power to bear on freedom camping planning and policy-making in the local
communities. The mayors though were still complicit in fostering predominantly reactive rather than proactive responses to acknowledged ascendancy of freedom camping pressures on their communities.

Further informants continued to paint a discourse around camping dogma. This was fuelled by inconsistent legislations and language and emerged to form steering sub-themes of ideology, conflict; and visons for the future bringing to bear a focus on power relations (see Appendix 2.6 – The path to power). Sometimes consequential and sometimes purposive the sometimes unqualified or rumour led dialogue circulating in the media was fuelling further conflict between stakeholders. Despite some evidence to attempts at voluntary collaborations between interest groups (e.g. ARRVCF; NCDN) there was little substantive evidence from the directly opposing lobbies of sustained cooperation or even partial solutions to such conflict. Instead, problem-focused power games, which muddy interpretation of current policy or deliberately thwart future policy development through mischief-making, mistrust, or dismissed political importance, dominated the local-level policy arena. Local communities and their respective local governments remain divided on the phenomenon and continue to grapple reactively with the challenges that present to them. While some are envisioning a future with freedom camping presenting new commercial and not-for-profit opportunities supported through ‘political modernisation’ (Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004, p. 341) others remain captured in past market driven business and legislative models; lacking imagination or capacity to adapt to shifting local, domestic and/or global societal forces. (Litvaj & Stancekova 2015).

Although symptomatic of tourism more generally, I was reminded by Dredge (2011b) that this rear-vision mirrored ideology occurs where forms of tourism present as a wicked problem characterised by complex, multi-level interest structures. Such structures are imbedded in institutional arrangements that serve to inhibit whole-of-government approaches to tourism and innovative policy solutions:

Not only do the present organisational structures and cultures restrict meaningful collaboration, but strong, vocal and often highly emotive industry support for current arrangements — including the focus on marketing — serve to inhibit the development of alternative arrangements and direction (p. 169).

Understanding the prospects for future policy adjustment under a regime of complex legislative management and multi-layered bureaucracy continues to plague local government. The four LG cases further demonstrate how the values, interests and beliefs of individual actors and collective bodies intersect with, and within, institutional arrangements of the state. While the Department
of Tourism, Events and Small Business in Queensland have taken carriage of the freedom camping problem by facilitating the Camping Options Toolkit, in contrast, the Division of Local Government and Department of Planning in New South Wales continue to stay comfortably imbedded in existing commercial camping legislation.

In summary, the analysis of freedom camping politics at the international (Chapter 3 - taxonomy of caravanning), national (Chapter 4 - legislative periods) and local (Chapter 5 - community governance) levels has direct implications for actors and agents involved. It provides new knowledge which contributes to the study of public policy in communities locally and towards tourism, leisure and recreation studies more generally. While it is not the intent of this thesis to generalise freedom camping practice beyond this case at hand, the number of micro and macro trends observed to influence the politics of freedom camping have analytic application to public policy-making more broadly. Attributes of cultural differentiation which occurs between local, state, national and international spheres is heightened through global-local relations impacting on the role and nature of tourism. Global-local shifts in environmental and social interpretations feed ebbs and flows of the political salience of tourism.

This thesis has demonstrated the liveliness that exists within the public-policy political arena on freedom camping in Australia. It suggests avenues for a possible and alternative path forward for legislative adjustment acknowledging and facilitative of the practice of freedom camping (supply and demand). It also contributes to the literature through an amended model and incremental adjustment to theories of tourism studies. Specifically, it postulates two points: first, allow private enterprise to get “back in” to the business of low-cost camping supply which will assist an industry lead narrowing of the current market gap and slow the evidenced market failure (see Chapter 6 – Conclusion); and second, present alternative paths forward for the analysis of public policy in fields beyond tourism by bringing power “back in” to the centre of planning and policy analysis (see Chapter 6 – Locating power at the centre of tourism policy studies).

### 7.3 Reflections and implications of this reseach

Freedom camping takes place in local communities. Local communities form local councils. Local councils in Australia operate in particularly complex environments between community and the state. They provide the modern nexus but are locked into historical legacies that imbue institutional structures laden with embedded values and meaning. The challenges for local government is to work upward with the state and downward with their constituents and sideways with their support agencies on issues that present as bigger than those manageable internally;
general vs task forces. Freedom camping and the politics it generates is such an issue. Local governments across Australia are challenged to break free of the entrenched ideas of caravan and camping supply and find new ways to support and facilitate their own organisational capacities to deal proactively with freedom camping demand. This in turn facilitates a new public management outlook (see Johnston 2000; Luke et al. 2011) to an old problem. Free camping is the old problem that has simply resurfaced in new cloths as freedom camping, though still camping in public places nonetheless. This challenges rural and urban communities seeking to maximise tourism economic receipts at minimum community welfare costs. Considering the ecological concept of humans in their environment, managing freedom camping requires communities to think and act sustainably, though perhaps now with more importance to resilience thinking; that which considers the capacity of a system to deal with change and continue to develop (Folke et al. 2004; Sroypetch & Caldicott 2017; Strickland-Munro et al. 2010).

Herein, I return to the geneses of freedom camping in Australia, pre-European settlement and then post settlement. The modern history of camping access to public lands, and further, to land ownership in Australia began the moment Australia was colonised by Great Britain in 1778. At that time, says Russell-Mundine (2010), ‘the British claimed Australia without negotiating with the people already living [camping] there and, not recognising the unfamiliar but complex systems of land ownership (p. 118)’. Instead, all land in Australia was considered by the British to be Crown land and this they proceeded to use as they saw fit, including complete freeholding and or variously termed leases. As settlers moved across the lands, taking possession and grazing their introduced stock, Indigenous people were dispossessed. During the 19th century many were forcibly placed in Aboriginal reserves (see Site Typology at p. 56). Their freedom of movement, and to camp, across their traditional lands was restricted (Russell-Mundine 2010). Although the Australian government has more recently taken steps to pass legislation, for example the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 and Native Title Act 1993 (Russell-Mundine 2010), to benefit Aboriginal people and assist them to rebuild indigenous communities, it does not erase the history. As settler land-ownership took hold and the need for access to markets and pasture increased, the travelling stock route was born (see Caldicott 2011a, 2011b; Smiles et al. 2011). In contemporary times along the stock routes, and particularly those in more closely settled areas, the herds are also largely gone and replaced by RV freedom campers.

Just as a large travelling “mob” (cattle, sheep or horses) would over-graze a stock route reserve if allowed to stay at the watering point for too long, the freedom camping “mob” (neo-tribes) are growing and presenting issues of environmental and social degradation at the popular resting
points. The stock route camping places that evolved across time to become highway rest stops eventually became over crowded and under serviced. Health and hygiene for persons and place then became a matter of public concern. These basic concerns of last Century (see Chapter 4 – The enabling period) are today once again raising their heads within local communities. Such communities seek answers from their local governments pertaining to this new round of the freedom camping phenomenon. As campers avoid the commercial sites and overflow, and even purposely bypass the road-side camps, they often form “unregulated” squats of street campers in suburban locations. Some locals, as in the case study town of Byron Bay for instance, have dubbed the carparks as ‘shanty towns’ as the vanpackers set up their makeshift camps (Morrow 2016). As some locals express concern and anger towards the camping, some governments look to “lock-out” regulation as the solution and as a quick fix. It is also ‘usually the cheapest option’ (Rooth 2015).

May and Lesh (2016), specifically referring to another social phenomenon - that of public drunkenness - argue that lock-out regulation can in fact just be ‘knee-jerk responses to tidy up the mess of complex issues [that] belie society’s need for diversity’. They argue Australian cities having ‘always been extraordinarily diverse places’. To control, constrain and conscript campers in the past, authorities made laws to force campers to enter controlled public camping places that provided at least a semblance of hygiene and facility. Many of these camp grounds further developed to become commercial caravan parks (Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b). Viewed as part of a broader historical pattern, May and Lesh (2016) suggest ‘such episodes of regulatory crackdown remind us that a seemingly purified city is not necessarily a healthy or diverse one’.

Today, in the first quartile of the 21st Century, local government is once again looking to find solutions to a camping phenomenon that is dividing their communities; producing instabilities of social behaviour in rural and urban spaces just as automobility first, and it’s associated car-camping second, did at the beginning of the 20th Century. As people “watch” each other (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for the understanding of the “other” in caravanning), through their gaze they ascribe unstable meanings onto each other based on common symbols and other visual identifiers. Some of the places where the instabilities play out are on the streets, in the parks, along the esplanades and in the carparks of ordinary towns. Freedom camping is propelled by a population explosion of baby-boomers entering the RV leisure market (Roy Morgan Research 2015) and a nationwide increase in international arrivals, particularly backpackers (Barrow 2015; Tourism Research Australia 2016c). Additionally, freedom camping is aided by rapid and recent disruptions with advances in RV and communication technologies (James 2015). This growth in
demand is causing local governments to once again look to restrictive local laws to manipulate supply. May and Lesh (2016) argue ‘this will deny value to cities as messy places’ a analogous position supported by McNamra and Quilter (2016) regarding street busking and Sri (2015) regarding RV street camping.

Through legislative intervention urban authorities seek to remove the nuisance by “locking out” the freedom campers thus clearing the streets for the “other” people; those that society perceives as more respectable. May and Lesh (2016) warn that lock-out laws are a mere repeat to the centuries-old mistake of denying cultural development amid broader sociocultural shifts. They contend that ‘even during periods of restrictive liquor licensing urban diversity has taken many forms, so long as alternative public places have been provided’. May and Lesh (2016) maintain that locking away one resource, through physical force or a blunt legislative instrument, without making an alternate resource available will simply cause unintended consequences. The overarching goal of such local authorities is to impose a sense of order by removing opportunity for people that behave (camp) in a manner and in spaces deemed socially undesirable. Policy makers, when confronted with such visual and undesirable clues seek to abate them as disgraceful nuisances justifying the introduced lock-out regulation. May and Lesh (2016) argue that to shut ‘the pub early impacts urban life as a holistic ecosystem and without viable public alternatives’ the anti-social behaviour simply enters the suburban homes and suburban streets or is transmitted into “other” neighbourhoods’. By example, when Sydney revellers are faced ‘with a strict 1.30am lock-out in Sydney’s CBD, those who don’t want to go home are heading to the Star Casino – where different licensing laws mean the party kicks on all night’ (Kozioi 2014).

Similar reactive movements by travellers occur as one council “locks out” freedom campers without consultation with neighbouring local governments (see also Chapter 4 – Local governments’ challenge). Rather than lock-outs, May and Lesh (2016) prefer to embrace the differences people present claiming ‘cities thrive as messy places. No matter the underlying justification, to “lock-out” the city is to diminish it’. Allen (2016) acknowledges public drunkenness provokes ‘a clear cycle of media attention, public outcry and government enthusiasm about the ongoing problem’ but contends it is merely ‘part of a broader pattern in the city’s history’. Allen (2016) also cautions the irony of the lock-outs suggesting such reactive regulation has helped to perpetuate ‘precisely the violent, misogynistic and law-breaking drinking culture that it was intended to control’ citing ‘the recent results in Sydney are at least debatable’.
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To lock-out freedom camping is not the solution for Australian towns and cities. Analogous with “street camping”, many councils are now seeing the need to provide that “alternate” space – a regulated space nonetheless (Petty 2017). Rural and urban councils are beginning to pool resources and also seek external support in managing their camping practice and policy environments. As my impetus for undertaking this research stems to a life-long involvement with caravanning and camping (see Chapter 1 – Researcher positionality) I remain mindful of making a difference; making this thesis useful to practitioners and policy makers beyond its academic contribution (see section 2.2 – The research paradigm of pragmatism). Research is used (useful) when it connects to practice and fits the context of practitioners’ experiences. Practitioners decide whether knowledge is useful (Mohrman & Lawler 2012; Rynes 2012). Following this line, several participants expressed their anticipation for this thesis to identify ‘where the problems lie and make sure that these are addressed and on the agenda of those that can actually make a difference, a policy difference’ (Brian, LG, operations). Further, demonstration of the need from practitioners for reliable information for decision-making is exhibited through personal communication received by me in May 2016 from the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC). As practitioners in the field they introduced themselves by directing me to their website suggesting it ‘provides a good snapshot of who we are and our role’ and additionally to their particular freedom camping issue:

...the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) is made up of membership of councils from Ingham north to Cooktown and west to Croydon.

...a number of committees and reference groups that support our role. The Economic Development group has identified the need for an RV Strategy for the region.

...in the first stage of researching RV Strategies for Local Governments and came across the proposal by the NCDN.

...you are currently researching this field. If you have the time I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the project with you.

In following up the FNQROC’s interest, we collaboratively shared our knowledge of the freedom camping political scene nationally and that specifically presenting within the FNQ council group. It was conveyed to me that tourism in some LGAs of far north Queensland was being severely impacted because of the no-tolerance or “lock-out” attitude shown to freedom campers by neighbouring councils. In some cases, freedom campers just stopped coming to the region as they were forewarned on social media of the intimidating community backlash. In other cases, the hard-line enforcement regime (fines) was again not slowing the activity merely displacing the activity into other neighbouring councils, those perceived to be “RV Friendly”. The problem of
freedom camping for local government is simply following the cycle of its past. Subsequently, it became apparent to me that May and Lesh (2016) may have simply been cautioning local and state governments of not repeating centuries-old mistakes with perhaps rash, new, constrictive or ill-considered policy adjustments.

Within local government there is now a growing emphasis on promotion and economic development and this places pressure on them to find ways to become more active and entrepreneurial in their affairs (Beaumont & Dredge 2010). Dredge (2001b) suggests ‘the role for local government is to assist in the development of network resources, synergy and flexibility so that institutional capacity for tourism planning and policy-making is enhanced’ (p. 255), a position the NCDN attempted and one the FNQROCs is now striving for. Some of the most serious impediments to tourism planning and policy-making in general, and to the wicked problem of freedom camping in particular, stem from the lack of new ideas, communication flows and knowledge building towards new models of camping operation. Instead, protracted argument based around old models of caravan park operations (acknowledged to be “locked-in” to state-based legislative bounds) and conflicting economic indicators have remained dominant in the debate. With new learning from this thesis, specifically around mutual understanding of the “other” and past policy approaches, the hollow echoes of risk, fear, and litigation now need to let go making way for new intransitive innovations in recreation and destination planning and policy-making that caters for all camping modes. Such amended legislation should complement and not compete with existing regulation and business models that are acknowledged to serve some camping operations and markets quite. However, they remain unequal in their treatment of the emerging freedom camping markets, particularly those consumers that swing between commercial and freedom sites.

The relationship between innovation, knowledge, ideas, vested interests (including the state) and power has been given considerable attention in the literature (Brooker et al. 2012; Dredge & Jenkins 2003b; Foucault 2002; Hall 2007b; Mintrom et al. 2014). However, this thesis has shown that the nexus between policy innovation and power has been dominated by transitive (destructive) relationships. These have caused the status quo of policy arrangements for freedom camping to be held at the winner and looser position. The landed-elite approach, long held by the market (commercial operators) with well-resourced and defined regional, state and federal structures and strong leadership is slowly being eroded. The influence of a new discourse delivered by CMCA (on behalf of the un-landed freedom campers) to local governments across the country is gaining political traction with councils caught in the middle.
Through these enduring conversations some councils are now seeking partnerships with CMCA through endorsement of the CMCA Member RV Parks initiative (CMCA 2015b). The public-private partnerships assist local communities in managing the physical wave of freedom campers and the politics of freedom camping. By engaging in legitimate public-private partnerships councils are attempting to address a market failure within an affordable RVing camping place supply chain. In so doing they are both cost shifting and risk shifting the phenomenon of freedom camping back across the caravan site preference pendulum ark (see Figure 33) and onto the private sector. CMCA, albeit a Club-based entity, is facilitating this stepping-stone stage (Corrigan; IBA 2013) of the caravan park and RV camping place product life-cycle (Caldicott 2011a; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013b).

The intuitional capacity of CMCA to engage in this public-private partnership model of camping supply is shown to have strengthened across the study period. CMCA reports 80 councils in 2016 now showing interest in further “solutions-based” engagement with their proposed model of operation, an operation that could be classified as a form of European Stellplatz camping. Eighteen sites are identified for CMCA Member RV park development and two parks are already open for business (CMCA 2015a, 2016, 2017). In the struggle of winners and losers the RV Parks innovation is producing a form of political modernisation despite the continuing lobby of the peak industry association for tighter regulatory compliance and level playing fields. This lobbing is aimed at the highest levels of federal government with the association recently having direct audience with the prime minister (CIAA 2016c). Although maintaining the transitive alignment, the intuitional capacity of CIAA has also strengthened considerably across the study period. Particularly following the 2015 merger between the caravan parks and caravan manufacturing arms of the industry. The significance of that decision is reported by CIAA as one that will ‘provide strategic direction, develop industry stretch targets, and allow for harmonised thinking throughout the sector’ (CIAA 2015d). Their mantra is ‘to have more meaningful interactions with more people more often’ (CIAA 2015d).

A combination of factors influence institutional capacity. As argued by Amin and Thrift (1994, p. 15), ‘those that are enabling for organisations, assisting them to develop new responsibilities which include: inter-institutional interaction and synergy; collective representation by many bodies; a common industrial purpose; and, shared values and cultural norms’. This thesis has shown such institutional thickness has manifested robustly within individual RVing institutions (including councils) but largely remains absent between institutions. The level and nature of intra-
organisational interaction has not extended to inter-intuitional cooperation and knowledge sharing with new RVing management ideas generating between the vested interests. The regressive and conservative nature of such interests remains a barrier-too-high to the implementation of efficient and effective policy entrepreneurialism. This situation continues to have significant and transitive implication for planning and policy productivity gains through freedom camping.

7.4 Contributions, limitations and further research avenues

This thesis is a pioneer study that sets as foundational the politics of freedom camping policy in Australia. It provides a solid platform though for understanding the policy-making, planning and implications of freedom camping for local communities, specifically within the states of New South Wales and Queensland. It does, however, present just one version of political history and just one interpretation of that history – that of my own analysis. I am thus reminded by Higgins-Desboilles (2010, p. 99) that we each have our own ‘mind’s eye’ and the ‘image/s of tourism that researchers hold in their mind’s eye’ can shape and influence the engagement with the study. Insights to the approach and the source of my vision of tourism as a societal phenomenon is often openly revealed through the narrative within. As acknowledged through Chapter 1, my own researcher positionality is inescapable. However, as also argued, my liminality (between insider and outsider) brings a perspective that others may not see. It certainly gave me unfretted access to a very broad cross section of policy actors allowing their perspectives (though often for expedience presented herein through a single participant narrative) to meld with my own, to form and generate “new” ideas, to ultimately steer the narrative and guide the plot. Notwithstanding the informative and valued influence of the participants and other sources in crafting this thesis, it is presented through my interpretation of that melding and moulding of ideas. Conceivably, others may find different results. As a forerunner, the thesis thus paves the way for others to continue the story, to tease out, expand, critique or reject numerous threads, or to take the model of and for analysis in tourism policy studies (see Chapter 6 - Figure 28) across to other disciplinary areas of research.

The specific contributions of the thesis and the way in which it advances knowledge for tourism, leisure and recreation studies are discussed in detail at Chapter 1. However, it is anticipated that the finding of this thesis will seed new avenues of investigation that will bring enhanced empirical and theoretical understanding to community-based tourism planning and local tourism policymaking. Notwithstanding the contribution made, a number of limitation have emerged across the study period and deserve more explanation. Optimistically though, each limitation provides
opportunity for further research to bring further relevance to practitioner, policy and research communities. The limitations are expanded upon next.

First, the geography of the study zone was limited to four local government areas within just two states of Australia. Although the rationale for selection is made clear through Chapter 1, it was nonetheless made from a tourism discipline perspective. While best attempts were made to seek towns and councils of difference (size, scale, attraction, access, coastal, inland) each was also highly engaged in the service and supply of tourism supply, proportionately relative to their geographic positioning, access attributes and touristic attractiveness (see Chapter 1 – Introducing local government engagement; and Chapter 4 – Local government case studies). Not every town in Australia is so positioned to proactively attract and service mainstream tourism but every town in Australia is a potential tourist destination for freedom camping as “new” camping markets emulate the pioneering spirit of the drovers along the stock routes – continually seeking new green pasture and good watering points – before setting the camp and lighting the fire; albeit metaphoric or real.

Some communities are welcoming of the “new” or incidental tourism interest while others are fearful of the stream and the character changing impacts freedom camping may bring; they remain disorientated by the political unrest surrounding freedom camping. Thus, the tourism discipline approach to the study could be swapped out with one of another discipline (e.g. environmental science, resource management, public health, social welfare, engineering or public infrastructure) to establish broader indicators around the parameters of freedom camping and the net-benefit/implications to regional communities. Comparative research across other borders (e.g. Northern Territory and Western Australia) where, due to the remoteness, the access is much more concentrated to just a couple of crossing points. Conversely in cities (e.g. Brisbane and Sydney) where impacts are concentrated to smaller hotspots (i.e. West End of Brisbane and Bondi of Sydney) within an otherwise oblivious urban landscape. Comparative studies between the Australian context and an international context (e.g. the United States or Central Europe) would bring further learning to the international caravan and camping knowledge bank.

Second, the thesis took a deliberate route to acknowledge the heterogeneity of freedom campers and thus while the analysis exposed examples of identifying determinants and behaviours of various sub-groups (neo-tribes) it did not focus solely on any one subset at the public-policy-level. Distinction in modes of operation, vehicle type (self-containment), behaviours and even trip patterns to some extent is noted in the difference between say vanpackers and grey nomads.
However, policy solutions may in fact also need to be differentiated to cope with such variances among the camping consumers holistically but even more so as they continue to cross the liminal line, swinging between modes of commercial camping and freedom camping. With continually moving population targets, though trending upward by both volume and percentage of total RV market (DTESB 2014d; Tourism Research Australia 2016a), local authorities are continually in need of fresh evidence when making planning and policy decisions to manage for the phenomenon. Consequently, opportunity exists to further investigate the separate needs of different freedom camping market segments to allow communities to make more informed planning and policy decisions around the future of camping within their communities.

Third, the concept of power, specifically that around the policy entrepreneur within tourism destination management broadly, and caravan and camping specifically, deserves further attention. Leisure tourism is an industry premised on fun. The industry is serviced by energetic, creative and well-placed individuals all working to support their particular brand of fun – some with specific agenda to bring new direction settings to the fore through policy change. Mintrom et al. (2014, p. 437) warn that despite the energy of the individual, ‘they can never progress those proposals without securing support from other people’. Several examples displayed through this study where initial momentum grew to progress particular national policy issues for caravan and camping broadly and also freedom camping more specifically. Sometimes the momentum was seeded by a state institution and sometimes by individual policy problem brokers before further development within coalition teams working at the local level. Examples of the latter include; the Australian Responsible Recreational Vehicle Campers Forum (ARRVCF); the North Coast Destination Network Freedom Traveller Task Force (NCDNFTTF); and, Byron Council’s Freedom Camping Working Group (BCFCWG), and finally the emerging Far North Queensland Freedom Camping Advisory Group (FNQFCAG). On each of the earlier occasions the momentum waned and the groups disbanded with the status quo left intact. Further insight is urgently needed within tourism studies, particularly planning and public policy, into the dynamics of policy entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. Investigation of successful policy entrepreneurs from other disciplines may shed transferable light into the gap that exist within tourism studies demonstrating how broad cross-partisan support mobilises bold policy initiatives.

Fourth, methodologically, this thesis is premised on the multiple cases approach (Yin 2014). Multiple LGAs across two states were considered to not only show the different perspectives on the politics of freedom camping policy but also to ‘increase analytical generalisability’ (Creswell 2013, p. 99; Yin 2014, p. 40) using the logic of replicability. This approach served this foundational
thesis very well. However, with the wider policy and political positions now established (see also Caldicott et al. 2014b), opportunity exists to drill deeper through a single instrumental case study (one of the four herein or another) to explore various issues of concern to that community as it is impacted from freedom camping. Such issues could feed previous recommendations for new knowledge on net community benefit: social displacement or enhancement; environment degradation or resource stewardship; resource distribution and asymmetries; and economic multipliers beyond direct tourism receipts; for instance.

Fifth, the conversational style of interviewing along with voices of a narrow group of participants as directly quoted could be considered a limiting factor of the study. Though the storylines presented, particularly through Chapter 5 – Local government engagement, were purposefully selected, they were the stories deemed most accommodating of the broader participant views expressed and interpreted through analysis, though with real, personal and discrete local example. Similarly, the layering applied to participants (policy, operational and agency/association) as reflected also through interview transcripts was not dissected to reflect subtleties from within the layering (e.g. general manager vs operations director). Opportunity exists for future research to take a deliberative stratification of participant engagement through either qualitative or quantitative methods.

Finally, from the perspective of the research approach, the adopted philosophy of pragmatism was useful in guiding a common sense stance that the culture of caravanning was being transformed in Australia by freedom camping. Pragmatism supports enquiry for conflict resolution through research connected to practice. The divides generated through freedom camping cannot be eliminated through any single policy amendment alone. Instead, successive adjustments will bring new consequences that will again require monitoring and evaluation. Each successive move can only then be further resolved through a deeper inquiry into the new problems to establish new postures towards common solutions. In the wake of Schon’s (1983), *The Reflective Practitioner*, and others, furthering the interactive approach to dialogue between key actors, and sectors, holds the most prospect for improving wicked problems. At best, it is claimed that wicked problems will only ever be addressed through iterative approaches with a high reliance on external learning processes involving multiple stakeholders (Head 2008; Roberts 2000). Among those freedom camping stakeholders are consumers, practitioners, policy makers and academic researchers.
However, Schon and Rein (1994, p. 188) recognised that researchers ‘tend to produce results more congenial to the standards of interest and rigour favoured by other academic researchers than to the standards of practical utility favoured by practitioners’. This divide, between the action in the swamp and the reflection from the high ground (Schon 1983) thus provides fertile avenues for bridges to be brokered between researchers, policy makers, and practitioners through joint activity. Head (2010, p. 582) concedes that ‘this focus is more likely to occur if at least some of these researching and learning processes are mutually constructed and experienced’. Such an approach is sometimes called action research, a method of inquiry attributed to Kurt Lewin (Masters 1995) or Mode 2 knowledge-making (Gibbons et al. 1994) which seeks to co-construct new knowledge. This thesis has shown that the deep ideological divides between stakeholders is fostering a void that needs such a knowledge-making bridge. The relevance therefore of this thesis to such “bridge building” is that there is now strong foundations in areas of freedom camping specifically, caravan and camping generally, and public policy-making in tourism, recreation and leisure studies more broadly to support such an approach.

7.5 Conclusion

During the writing of this thesis (2012 - 2017) the nation-wide debate over freedom camping received a lot of coverage in the press. The controversy of freedom camping extends across communities, across borders, across agencies, and across camping market segments. The indignation extends from banning “Wicked” campervans painted with slogans (those that communities are finding offensive) from entering public caravan and camping grounds (Mackenzie 2016; Wong 2016) to protests over grey nomads using road-side rest areas and local showgrounds as alternate camping places (Caravanning News 2015b; McGrath 2014). Andrea Ferris (2015), editor of Australia’s Go Camping & 4WD Adventures and Bill Garner (2013), author of the book Born in a Tent – how camping makes us Australian – have previously advocated for camping as part of this nation’s culture and national heritage. It is one of the most profound ways we interact with our environment. Such views were compounded by the direct conversations I had with my participants and also amplified through multiple parliamentary inquiries and local government consultations as described within. The thesis acknowledges these compounding feelings and endorses the notion that ‘a certain amount of opportunity to free camp is, more-or-less, an Australian entitlement’ (Ferris 2015) notwithstanding a moral commitment as responsible campers ‘to discipline ourselves without any wilful coercion from others’ (Gaventa 2003).

This thesis exposes the seriousness of the freedom camping debate in Australia and its implications on the Australian culture, particularly if the right to publicly camp was taken away
through future policy action. However, in recognition to the cause to some of the unfavourable politics over freedom camping the thesis also confirms a very sobering messages. Campers of Australia hear this:

If you continue to use campsites as toilets and waste dumping areas and have little or no regard for either the land managers, environment, wildlife or fellow campers, the next generation will have very few places to bush camp and next to nowhere that’s free to camp (Ferris 2015).

In response, the thesis advocates for coordinated state-level policy intervention to facilitate a dialogue that legitimises space for “regulated” freedom camping, a ‘paradox of everyday living usually conducted in controlled environments with the formulation of perceived freedom as the art of not being governed quite so much’ (Foucault 1984). Freedom camping requires a space where individuals are vehicles of power, not its points of application. It is imperative that the camping public comes up with novel, innovative or simply common sense ways to self-regulate, to educate all campsite users, to effectively self-police and punish those that do the wrong thing before the state takes the opportunities away (see Chapter 3 – Conceptual framework for understanding the “other” of caravanning).

Governments, federal, state and local, contend with the asymmetries in policy-making every day. For freedom camping they administer the divide between those that want, those that don’t want’ and those that are impacted by the phenomenon - who gets what, where, when and how? To assist governments in their public policy-making, the thesis encourages freedom campers, commercial operators, and communities to collectively lobby government representatives in expectation that the political machinery of the state will respond to well-thought out and united proposals. Such community-based and cooperative policy ideas would see freedom camping enshrined but social and environmental litterers exposed and penalised. The rally is for a balance; that of preserving freedom of choice camping as a way of life and that of preserving natural and economic ecosystems through a legislative disruption supported by self-regulation and peer policing – the panoptic gaze. This approach advocates for mutual and incremental upward (peer) social control and downward (government) policy adjustment reflecting Ferris’s (2015) call for camping stakeholders not to just ‘sit on your hands and be apathetic, or our way of life will be forsaken’.

This thesis has delved headlong into the murky swamp of freedom camping praxis and the agora of public policy-making to bring greater understanding to a relatively understudied aspect of tourism – freedom camping as a wicked problem. Historically, camping *per se* is acknowledged,
among a range of topics, with perceived research gaps. Specifically, this concession was revealed towards the end of last Century through Demetriadi’s (1995) annual review of hospitality and tourism trends and also highlighted by Kelly (1994) as tourism’s Cinderella sector and also Ingram (1996) through the WHATT-CD International Hospitality and Tourism Research Register. Some two decades on, empirical reference to camping is still only receiving incidental, or more particularly, indirect mention on the back of a developing, but still fledgling body of work on caravanning (Blichfeldt & Mikkelsen 2016; Brooker & Joppe 2013; Caldicott et al. 2014b; Garst et al. 2010; Mikulic et al. 2017). A scan of recent literature also reveals just how patchy the freedom camping reference remains despite Kelly’s (1994) specific observation that many caravanners were ‘making use of road-side rest stops, national parks and vacant land for short-term stays’ outside of traditional caravan parks (p. 44).

In 2017, councils across Australia still find themselves in vexed situations on freedom camping – on the one hand, trying to attract visitors to bring general new wealth and specific revenues into their communities; and on the other hand, looking to support or protect the economic interests of the commercial caravan park operators within their towns. Existing literature again remains fragmented with emphasis towards tourism markets, motivations and segments (Hardy et al. 2006; Mackellar 2006; Patterson et al. 2011; Wu & Pearce 2014). Studies on tourism planning, policy and political leadership are noticeably inadequate (Blichfeldt et al. 2014; Dredge & Jenkins 2011b; Hall 2011c). Osborne (2010) and Hardy and Gretzel (2011) reinforce that the practice and policy needs of RV travellers are not currently being met, forcing the debate around market failure into bureaucratic and political worlds. However, it is important for local authorities to balance up the need and net benefits of attracting this type of tourism before launching into provision of infrastructure that the private sector may be willing to offer (Creagh 2013), albeit under amended legislative opportunity.

This thesis demystifies the black-box of tourism planning, decision-making and public policy. It first presented a taxonomy of freedom camping to aid international understanding of the “other” in the freedom camping policy arena. Second, it presented a chronological history of freedom camping through an Australian legislative lens. Third, through direct local government and local community engagement the thesis described how local government interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping. These three avenues of investigation cover the aims and objectives of this thesis, by capturing the dynamic nature of tourism planning and policy-making, and its inherent management implications for freedom camping in local communities. Through analysis of the politics of freedom camping the concept of power was shown to be pervasive with
aspects emerging through stakeholder’ relationships, the dispositions of actors, and the structures of institutions. Acknowledging the extensive and learned contribution of tourism political theorists before me (see in particular Arts & Van Tatenhove 2004; Dredge & Jenkins 2011b; Hall 1994; Hall & Jenkins 1995), the thesis presents an incremental adaption to a three-dimensional conceptual framework for the study of tourism planning and policy. The framework has power returned to its centre (see Chapter 6 – Figure 28) as the fundamental root of policy studies. The concepts of place and sector are added to space, and is each acknowledged to change across time.
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Appendix 1: Glossary of terms, RV styles, spaces and segments

1.1 Common terms – description and discourse

Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) is a not-for-profit member based organisation that ensures member recreational vehicle owners have accurate government representation focused on preserving the RV lifestyle and safe travel for all RV enthusiasts. With over 66 000 members, CMCA is the largest RV Club in the southern hemisphere. Established in 1986, CMCA has a long standing history built on the foundations of adventure, enjoyment, education and fun! Members have access to numerous benefits, including tailored RV insurance, a monthly magazine, social events through 100 local chapters across Australia, a Solos’ Network for members travelling alone and a National and Anniversary Rally each year. Membership provides opportunity for camaraderie, community support, positive experiences and the security of travelling Australia, knowing you are never alone (CMCA 2014).

Camping in the context of this thesis, is intractably linked to the contemporary concept of using a recreational vehicle (caravan) as a mode of overnight accommodation. While it moves away from more traditional notions of tenting (i.e. use of a non-ridged and portable cloth-based shelter placed directly and independently on the ground), today’s proliferation (in volume and style) of modern camper/tent trailers, also considered by definition as RVs, and roof-top tents fitted directly to RVs, is blurring boundaries between numerous RV market segments that frequent private and public vehicle related (must have vehicular access) camping spaces. For example, motorcyclists and bicyclists as part of a wider travelling public and thus consumers of camping spaces, by necessity, have camping preferences rooted to ground-based portable tents though they are observed utilising the vehicle related camping spaces.

Caravan is a term for any motorised or towable vehicle used as a mode of accommodation and is used interchangeable with recreational vehicle (RV).

Caravan Industry Association of Australia Ltd (CIAA) is the peak national body for the Australian caravan and camping industry representing over 3500 industry businesses ranging from caravan parks, manufacturers and retailers of industry products, suppliers of goods and services, and service providers. Formed on 12 July 2014, CIAA is an amalgamation of the former Caravan,
Recreational Vehicle and Accommodation Industry of Australia Ltd (CRVA) and the Recreational Vehicle Manufacturers of Australia Ltd (RVM). CIAA’s vision is, ‘To lead and champion a robust, compliant and sustainable caravanning and camping industry in Australia’, with four operation pillars – marketing; research; lobbying and advocacy; compliance, accreditation and training - working towards this vision (CIAA 2016d).

**Caravanning** as a mode of travel, in Australia, refers to the practice of camping overnight in any motorised or towable caravan occupying either commercial or non-commercial camping sites.

**Caravan-park** is a discrete landholding established, subject to the rules and regulations of the controlling authority, for the primary function of servicing the tourism industry through the active provision of short-term and/or long-term fixed or mobile accommodation space to the general public. They provide powered or unpowered sites for caravans and make toilet, shower and laundry facilities available to guests, in exchange for an advertised market based fee (ABS 2011, cat. no. 8635.0)

**Freedom camping** is the practice whereby domestic or international travellers occupy, by deliberate choice, a recreational vehicle as a mode of accommodation in an open space that is not bound by market-based commercial norms and camping and/or caravan park-based regulations (Caldicott et al. 2014b).

**Glamping** as a fusion of glamour and camping has emerged over the last decade. Glamping pivots on a high level of service that focuses on the complete comfort of the guests. The amenities found at glamping destinations far exceed anything most recreational camper’s experience. Both independent properties and global hospitality brands have capitalized on a rising demand of travellers who want to experience the positive aspects of camping without the “uncomfortable” negatives. When you’re glamping, there’s no tent to pitch, no sleeping bag to unroll and no fire to build. Whether in a tent, yurt, hut, villa or treehouse, glamping is a way to experience the great outdoors without sacrificing luxury (Glamping.com 2015).

**Global nomad** is a full-time traveller who wanders the world of their own accord without a fixed abode, place of employment, or localised circle of friends. Their journey has lasted at least three years, and some of them have parted from their countries of origin decisively. They live in the margins of sedentary societies and many of them have chosen to forego the security that regular income, health care, and insurance would have provided them within their country of origin. Global
nomads are homeless, or—depending on your point of view—at home wherever they happen to be (Kannisto 2014).

**Grey nomad** is an Australian colloquial term applied to retired or semi-retired people, generally over 55 years, that enjoy the nomadic lifestyle travelling for all or significant parts of the year (greater than three months) as empty nesters once freed from the constraints of work and family life. See Appendix 1.5 – Camping market segments (Grey nomads) for full description. The term nomad in the context of freedom camping is borrowed from cultural theorist Karen Kaplan as ‘a person who has the ability to track a path through a seemingly illogical space without succumbing to nation-state and/or bourgeois organization and mastery’ (Kaplan 1996, p. 66).

**Recreational vehicle (RV)** is a term for any motorised or towable vehicle used as a mode of accommodation and is used interchangeable with caravan.

**Stakeholder**, in the context of this study, is aligned to the concepts of relationships, of cause and effect, from Freeman’s (1984, p. 46) interpretation that ‘a group or individual who can effect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives’ is considered a stakeholder. While recognising the business orientation to this broad interpretation and existence of the protracted definitional debate and theoretical salience through the business, public, and non-profit sector literature (Beach et al. 2010; Bryson 2004; Fontaine et al. 2006; Laplume et al. 2008; Mitchell et al. 1997; Orts & Strudler 2009) a more detailed distinction and analysis of stakeholder variants is beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Van-packers** are generally considered as the 18-30 year-old demographic, both domestic and international, that prefer the freedom of independent transport for their backpacking experience in Australia. While some use their own private conventional vehicles for their travel and camping mode, they tend to use hired rental vans with high brand recognition such as Wicked, Jucy, Spaceship and Hippy Camper. The latter providing a direct link back to the nostalgia of freedom *hippies* of the 1960s and the ubiquitous Kombi camper-van (Associated Press 2013; Harding 2013).

### 1.2 Recreational Vehicle (RV) styles - description and discourse

**Camper trailers** as an upgrade from tent trailers are generally more comfortable and convenient but still easily towed by smaller vehicles. They are generally easy to set up, and provide generous room and equipment. They usually include a built-in gas cooker, refrigerator, table and sink. Specialist off-road models designed to be towed by 4x4 vehicles are becoming popular with more
sophisticated designs gaining greater degrees of self-containment (i.e. inclusive of showers, toilets and holding tanks for grey and black waste).

**Campervans/Class C motorhomes** have a compact fit-out in a high roof or pop-top van. They can be driven on a car licence and used as a passenger vehicle. Equipment usually features a kitchen, eating and sleeping areas with ensuite in larger models only.

**Caravan** is a term broadly interchangeably with recreational vehicle (RV) and includes specific variants including motorhomes, campervans, pop-tops, camper-trailers, tent-trailers, converted buses, slide-on campers and 5th wheelers. As a unique RV unit, a caravan is a towable product and can vary greatly in size and format, anything up to 10 metres long with up to three axles. They are often equipped with two comfortable births, but can have up to six, or more, births. Fit-out can be basic or luxurious with full modern kitchens. Some have slide-outs, extendable and retractable, for extra living or bedroom space and many are now standard with ensuites and waste holding tanks for greater degrees of self-containment. Specialist off-road models designed to be towed by 4x4 vehicles are becoming popular.

**Class A motorhomes** are typically top-end RVs, 7-12 metres long and 7-14 tonnes, with custom bodywork on a specialist RV chassis or adapted truck chassis. Usually fitted with luxury amenities, they can cost up to half a million dollars, even more. Highly specialised designs are tailor made (e.g. luxury living or off-road capabilities) matching client specifications. As a heavy vehicle an upgraded driver’s licence is required.

**Class C motorhomes** range from economy to luxury models built on a cab-chassis with a caravan style body. Weighing 4.5-7 tonnes and measuring 6-13 metres, they retain the donor vehicle’s cabin, often with an overhead bunk style. Slide-outs are increasingly common as are ensuites with waste holding tanks. 4x4 models, while not the mainstay, are increasing in popularity. As a light ridged vehicle a driver’s licence, upgraded from passenger vehicle, is required.

**Fifth-wheelers** are towed by a truck or pick-up via a hitch similar to that in a semi-trailer – the fifth wheel – fitted to the bed of the tow vehicle. Usually large and luxurious, they normally feature raised master suite above the hitch. An articulated vehicle driver’s licence is required.
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

**Pop-top caravans** are similar to fully equipped caravans, sometimes even with an ensuite, but with a pop-up roof providing up to a metre of headroom. Their low profile, when the roof is stowed, reduces the wind resistance when towing and facilitates storage in a standard garage or carport.

**Roof-top campers (tents)** are compact foldaway tents that mount directly to the roof-rack bars and can be fitted to most make and model of vehicle – both conventional 2-wheel drive and larger 4-wheel drives. They consist of a bare sleeping compartment, with only mattress and 12 volt lights, nested on top of the vehicle but can be extended to include a fold out awning, fly and wind breaks to provision a cooking and living area at ground level, either to the side or rear, of the host vehicle. Additional camping devices (e.g. stoves, sinks, refrigerators) would be free stored or purposely mounted within the confines of the host vehicle. This configuration has the amenity advantages of a camper trailer without the towing burden.

**Slide-on campers** are designed to sit on the back of a Ute, pick-up, or light truck and can have features similar to a caravan or camper trailer. They allow for towing a separate trailer (boat) and can be parked on built-in jacks to enable detached use of the host vehicle. Models are available for standard 2x4 utilities and also the 4x4 variety.

**Tent trailers** typically comprise of a box trailer, used to store portable cooking and camping equipment, plus a lift-out tent for sleeping and living space. Often light and small enough to be towed by small vehicles, there are also off-road versions for rugged terrain.

### 1.3 Freedom camping terms - description and discourse

A range of alternate names for freedom camping are noted in the literature and described in international case studies, RV industry reports, web services, social media apps and marketing material. Those sampled from the United States, Europe, United Kingdom, Scandinavia and South Africa include; boondocking, wild, wilderness, random, dry, enroute, transit, stealth, aire de service, park-over-property, camping caristes and Stellplatz camping. As these terms are not common in Australia they have not been extensively explored with this thesis. Freedom camping, however, as a generic term has been accepted by New Zealand within their recently adopted legislation - *Freedom Camping Act 2011*.

**Free camping** is one name that particularly evokes disquiet among commercial camping operators. In everyday use free camping is a term that connotes a strong “nil” commercial transaction model, i.e. “free”. While in some instances within the camping vernacular it literally does means “no fee”
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

it is more often interpreted and used interchangeably with bush, low-cost, subsidised, illegal and freedom; depending upon the context, author and audience and as such does not support a blanket rejection of a commercial transaction – of sorts! Rather, low-cost camping acknowledges a commercial fee in an amount that is considered by RVers to be of “fair value”, contributing to their desired experience. The fee is a considerably lesser amount than the market-based commercial rate of a caravan park site, if available, in the same location. Anecdotal evidence, from personal conversations and web blogs, suggests that this fee could range from $0 - $25 per site night and may be a set/collected fee or by voluntary donation.

Via a submission to the Western Australian Shire of Esperance – making Esperance RV friendly, the Caravan Industry Association of Western Australia (CIAWA) suggests a ‘low-cost’ fee of $20 is acceptable to consumers seeking basic serviced sites (CIAWA 2014, p. 7). The CMCA 2013 RV growth and demand snapshot, reported through the Fraser Coast camping Options Strategy, suggests ‘convenience and desirable accommodation is a primary motivator for length of stay and level of spend’ for RV travellers with ‘77% prepared to pay up to $10.00 to access non-commercial accommodation’ (Fraser Coast Camping Stakeholders Group 2015, p.13). In recent developments concerning provision for low-cost camping in Queensland, CMCA have partnered with the local government in Herberton to create a “no frills” overnight parking lot exclusive to CMCA members that travel with self-contained vehicles. Hinchinbrook Shire Councillor, Lawrence Molachino, say Council was pleased to lease the site to CMCA as this community is generally supportive of RV visitors claiming campers brought benefits to local businesses (McMahon 2015). The bare-bones site will not have any amenities, lighting or power. Dumping and filling facilities are available directly across the road at the visitor information centre. Travellers will pay $10 a night to park with a maximum 48 hour stay.

This public-private partnership initiative is a first for the Australian based Campervan and Motorhome Club that continually seeks to provide exclusive value-add benefits to its members. CMCA spokesperson, Colin Balfour, suggests that the Club is negotiating with other councils in Queensland, NSW and Victoria with the view to further trials of the local government/Club partnerships before rolling out a succession of sites around the country in the latter half of 2015 (pers. comm., Colin Balfour 9 February; 6 March 2015). [Epilogue – Further and additional to the trial in Herberton, Hinchinbrook Shire Council on 23 June resolved to approve a short-stay recreational van park on Lot 2 DP122468 at the corner of Davidson & Cooper Streets, Ingham (Resolution 230615-21 - Hinchinbrook Shire Council 2015).
Subsidised camping is an alternate term to low-cost camping. Subsidised camping is the provision of a service by a third party, often a local government authority, community organisation or chamber of commerce, where again the fee is of an amount that is considered by RVers to be at a considerably lower cost than the market-based commercial fee of a comparable caravan park site. Here the sponsoring organisation recognises and absorbs the “gap” between revenue generation and provision costs. Gap costs are absorbed on the basis that the activity is deemed by the provider to bring a net positive economic, environmental or social input into the host community. The gap or lack of “full-cost attribution” is contentious with caravan industry associations around Australia. They strenuously argue that such provision is a breach of National Competition Policy (NCP) as outlined within the Hilmer Report (Hilmer et al. 1993).

In its broadest sense, competition policy encompasses all policy dealing with the extent and nature of competition in the economy (p. xvi). However, in a practical sense it is designed to restrict private enterprise collusion among specialised elites and rather, promote peaceful competition and compromise between elites in politics and the marketplace. In a public sector sense, national competition policy calls out public subsidisation of equivalent services that can be adequately provided by the private sector in the same market economy. Thus any real choices, outside of the private sector, are considered unfair competition and are politically limited. Worse still, any development of alternative choices or even any serious discussion and consideration of them is effectively discouraged by the private sector. Lindblom (1977) introduces the concept of controlled violation where even in democracies, masses are persuaded to ask from elites only what elites wish to give them.

Consequently, in an attempt by commercial park operators to discourage alternative models to the status quo of commercial caravan park operations the anti-competitive principle has been applied to several councils. There exists several precedents where the anti-competitive concept, particularly in respect to the provisioning by local governments of free or low-cost camping, have been challenged. Definitional argument of what constitutes a ‘significant business’ activity and what constitute ‘public interest’ appear to be at the heart of the arguments on either side. The size of the perceived unfair (illegal) operation, in both gross dollar turn-over terms and also capacity (share of market) terms compared to the scale of the commercial (legal) alternatives in the same region are considered under the test. By way of Queensland example, the Local Government Act (Queensland Parliamentary Counsel 2012) deems a business activity (other than for provision of water and sewage services) that has expenditure of at least $9 million to be a significant business activity. In regard to the provision of freedom camping by local governments, investigations in
several states (Department of Local Government and Communities 2014b; LGAT 2012b; Queensland Ombudsman 2006; Queensland Parliamentary Counsel 2012) have found neither criterion, that of gross turn-over nor market share, to be in breach of the National Competition Policy:

The annual turnover of the caravan park operations in Barcaldine and Blackall was not large enough to trigger the competitive neutrality principles for public sector agencies. Both councils had also exercised their right not to apply the Local Government Code of Competitive Conduct to their caravan parking operations (Queensland Ombudsman 2007).

However, transparency of reporting, particularly regarding full-cost attribution of public funds, has been shown to be fruitful in addressing the concerns of complainants. Local governments are thus encouraged to balance public interest with private interests through open disclosure.

In 2015, the Harper Report (Dimasi et al. 2015) makes a case for the overhaul of the two decade old competition policy seeking to have a more transparent and contemporary ‘effects test’ introduced (Merrett 2015, p. 1). ‘Reform is not only overdue, given stalled reform effort in the 2000s, but critical to improving Australia’s productivity performance and to sustaining our living standards into the future’ the report cautioned. Probably the most controversial proposal will be Harper’s competition policy review panel’s recommendation that the competition law be amended to replace a "dominant purpose" test with an "effects" test when assessing abuse of market power and anti-competitive conduct. ‘Section 46 of the Policy should instead prohibit conduct by firms with substantial market power (e.g. major food or oil corporations) that has the purpose, effect, or likely effect, of substantially lessening competition, consistent with other prohibitions in the competition law’ (Janda & Diss 2015, p.1).

This legal wrangle enveloping competition, protectionism and market failure opportunely opens the door for opponents to freedom camping to loudly complain about illegal camping. This contentious and often emotive term is generally used deliberately by the media and the commercial camping sector, namely caravan parks and/or their representative association bodies, to bring public and government attention to an activity that is situated outside of convention and norms. It stems from minority public and vested interest concern that many freedom camping venues, particularly those on showgrounds or other public reserves auspice by local councils, are deemed by the complainant as not compliant, that is, they do not operate within the same regulatory bounds as commercial operators that must comply with their individual development assessment (DA) conditions. In most instances such conditions are regulated under the Local
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

Government Act of their respective states and territories. By Queensland example, this regulation for private lands is a Sub-ordinate Local Law - Operation of Caravan Park or Camping Ground; or for Crown land, administered under Section 52 of the Lands Act 1994. Consent to occupy land for freedom camping is not always sought by the camper at every venue nor on every occasion of camping occupation. Similarly, consent is often not explicitly given by the land owner. More often, consent is implied by the consumer to have been given by the owner, due to observed, or pre-advised practice at the venue. This advice comes in a range of mediums from traditional guidebooks (e.g. Lonely Planet or Camps Australia Wide) or more likely through social media and dedicated camp-finder apps (e.g. Wikicamps, HomeCamp, Youcamp).

Thus the issues of illegality and trespass (Coagan 2010) do, on occasions, become contentious. This contention over legality is common across most parts of Australia with local and national media sensationalising the situation escalating the controversy in hotspots such as Darwin (NT), Airlie Beach and Hervey Bay (Qld), and Byron Bay and Bondi (NSW) for example. Of particular concern in these areas is the form of van-packing or street camping by younger international backpackers. In respect to grey nomads freedom camping, current boil-over spots by example are Bauple and Birdsville (Qld), Glenn Innes and Wagga Wagga (NSW), Warrnambool and Lakes Entrance (Vic) and Ningaloo and Esperance (WA). In these locations, caravanners are upsetting the locals and or the commercial caravan park operators by occupying public places that are not zoned for camping.

Public car parks, residential streets and vacant industrial, retail or residential blocks are being transformed into de-facto camping grounds on a regular, and in some cases nightly, basis. Camping consumers, more common but not limited to younger international visitors, take the liberty to pull up and stay overnight in either regulated and non-regulated street parking spaces, along public foreshores or at other popular scenic or convenient vantage points within an urban environment. On some occasion the activity is naively undertaken by the RVer as implied consent to occupy is again considered as given due to the observed practice at the venue. However, on other occasions, the activity is known prior to arrival by the RVer, or is signposted on-site, as non-compliant but the consumer is still prepared to run-the-risk of being moved on by regulation officers or even face penalty through a statutory authority (Byron Shire Council 2012b, 2015b; Clement 2015a, 2015b). The void in consistent regulation plus the lack of uniformity in definitions (i.e. camping, overnight, resting or sleeping) across state boundaries, within and across LGAs, coupled with the common practice within other international contexts all contribute to the confusion. This confusion is further escalated through the imagery and slogans frequent used by commercial caravanning interests in their advertising of the caravanning products, parks and experiences. Many of the
marketing images show carefree consumer activity, including RVs situated in “apparent” freedom camping locations – those in natural and open and often isolated spaces along rivers or beach esplanades rather than aligned in static rows within a caravan park with a security fence and boom-gates. Similarly, the accompanying slogans promote “freedom” and “getting away from it all”.

1.4 Commercial camping spaces – description and discourse

In view of the evolution, in both on ground amenity and promotional branding of camping places the following section describes the original and evolved caravan park models with specific reference to their freedom camping implications.

**Holiday-park** is a common feature in the caravan park promotional vernacular. It has been around for some time now though is not always reflected in governing legislation. While each state and territory in Australia has its own legislation, in a current proposals to amend the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Legislation in Western Australia (WA) the term holiday park is being suggested to replace the term caravan park. The rationale is that due to the high prevalence of mixed-use (short-term and long-term) sites within parks the government feels that caravan park is not adequately reflecting the current practice that most parks are mixed-use parks. The new term, holiday park, will better reflect the intention for the land to be primarily for the sole use of short-term occupiers (i.e. tourists rather than permanent residents) thus means an area of land on which caravans, campervans and/or tents may be situated for short-term habitation (Department of Local Government and Communities 2014a). Within NSW legislation the *Holiday Parks (Long-term Casual Occupation) Act 2002* was introduced in February 2003 to protect consumers who had annual-vans located permanently in caravan parks but only for holiday use, not full-time residential (Fair Trading NSW 2014). ‘Many caravan parks with cabins and upgraded guest facilities prefer to use the term holiday park, reflecting their status as more than a caravan park but still more affordable than a holiday resort’ (Lin 2013, p. 11).

**Holiday resort** is similar to holiday park. This term has also been a common feature in the caravan park promotional vernacular for some time but likewise is also not always reflected in governing legislation. Resort by name, resort by nature, infers that these properties have a higher and sometimes completely contained set of accommodation services and amenities pitched in a

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16 New caravan parks and camping grounds legislation is being developed in Western Australia and the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995 is currently under review as part of that process. As the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 (the Regulations) contain the fine detail that fill in the broad outline in the legislation, preliminary work on the Regulations will take place in parallel with the work on the new Act.
marketing sense at a targeted market. This suggests that they are a fully self-contained themed destination within a regional destination. The holiday resort concept is juxtaposed to nature park concept.

**Nature-park** is only acknowledged as a specific camping place category listing within Western Australia through their *Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Act 1995*. The category was originally ill-defined and the Act with its associated regulations was overly prescriptive. Consequently it was not able to cope readily with the changes taking place in current camping markets. By example, *Regulation 49* of the Act prohibited the granting of a license for a transit park or a nature park if there was a caravan park or camping ground within 50 kilometres of the applicants proposed site. In effect, the legislation created an “exclusion” zone, a deliberate barrier to new entrants. A National Competition Policy review in 2013 found *Regulation 49* to be anti-competitive and recommended that it be removed. It also recommended that a set of minimum standards for nature-based parks become legislative provisions. Following this finding, and a three months consultation by the Department of Local Government and Communities in 2014, the repeal of *Regulation 49* was endorsed by the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Advisory Committee (WA) and approved by the Minister for Local Government in late 2014.

This single incremental (Lindblom 1979) shift in WA policy is extremely symbolic for freedom camping in Queensland and New South Wales as the ripple effect spreads nationally. The shift not only acknowledges demand it also demonstrates a political pattern of ‘political change by small steps’ (p. 517). The “exclusion” zone is a consistent and reoccurring theme arising in political debate over legality, acceptance and tolerance of freedom camping places around Australia. CMCA’s own RV Friendly Town Scheme has also de-emphasised the exclusion zone from that of seeking overnight camping places within 50km of a town centre at the Scheme’s inauguration in 2007 to one of zero kilometres, or ‘as close as possible to the CBD’ in 2015 (CMCA 2015c). This small and incremental step is significant demonstration that the markets, and rules of engagement, are moving favourably toward freedom camping in urban environments.

The nature-based park category of camping ground is particularly relevant to this thesis, albeit in WA rather than Queensland or New South Wales. For the first time within state-based caravan and camping legislation there is a clear requirement for developer applicants to recognise, identify and disclose the specific target market that they wish to attract to their camping facility. This stark shift is in direct recognition that the caravan and camping market is splintering. The freedom camping market in particular seeks camping venues with much more primitive facilities than those generally
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

offered within other categories of caravan parks. It also directly references National Competition Policy and the definitional confusion between legislation and demand. Over the past decade, there have been a significant number of caravan park closures in WA, reflective of trends in other states, due to increasing land values and higher operating costs (Caldicott 2011b; Caldicott & Scherrer 2013a; Department of Local Government and Communities 2014a; DTESB 2014d; Reed & Greenhalgh 2004). This places additional demands on remaining parks and is also creating demands for new styles of parks in new locations, not least those that can cater to the growing freedom camping market. In addition to the removal of Regulation 49, the second round of consultations for the review of caravan parks and camping grounds legislation proposes further amendments to the Regulations, not least in regard to clarifying definitions (Department of Local Government and Communities 2015).

The original definition of nature-based park, at best described as vague and ambiguous (Caravanning News 2015a; Department of Local Government and Communities 2014b), has now received clarification. From 1 January 2015, Nature-based-park in WA means:

A facility in an area that is: 1) not in close proximity to an area that is built up with structures used for business, industry or dwelling-houses, at intervals of less than 100 metres for a distance of 500 metres or more; 2) has been predominately formed by nature; and, 3) has limited or controlled artificial light and noise intrusion (DLGC 2015b).

The new legislation provides surety about what to expect from a nature-based park and imposes responsibilities onto the owners to advertise limited facilities, although, they cannot be devoid of consistent minimum standards for health and safety (DLGC 2015b). For example, density of sites is not to exceed one site per 50 square metres being approximately one half the density permitted in a standard commercial park. There is currently 25 registered nature parks in WA but this legislative change is expected to stimulate further applications (Government of Western Australia 2015). ‘It is intended that a flexible approach be taken when assessing the Management Plan [licensing application requirement], with a focus on the intended market segment for the park and type of facilities required, balanced with environmental sustainability’ (DLGC 2015b, pp. 4-5).

Primitive camp grounds (PCG) in NSW, like their WA nature-based counterparts, are a lower key facility than conventional camping grounds and are just one type of camping ground covered by the Local Government (Manufactured Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005. The Regulation does not require PCGs to have, for example, sealed roads, hot water or laundries (Department of Planning 2006). There is about 50 PCGs in NSW — ranging in size from approximately 0.5 hectares to over 600 hectares. They are often in
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

scenic locations such as in bush land, near rivers or on the coast. The Regulation (see especially clauses 73 and 132) provides two options and more flexibility in regulating camping density for PCGs. Under the Regulation an approval to operate a PCG can either: designate camp sites where tents, caravans and campervans may be located — in which case the maximum number of camp sites is not to exceed an average of two per hectare (that average being calculated over the total area of the PCG); or, not designate camp sites — in which case the maximum number of tents, caravans and campervans permitted to use the ground at any one time is not to exceed an average of two per hectare (that average being calculated over the total area of the PCG); with a concession that two or more tents occupied by not more than 12 persons camping together as a group are to be counted as only one tent.

Although often touted as a means of avoiding some of the more stringent clauses of Regulation 2005, as they pertain to caravan and camping parks in general, the highly restrictive site densities described above seriously hinder the commercial viability of any such operation approved under current NSW legislation. It must be noted that the PCG was originally introduced into the Caravan and Camping Regulation 2005 not for commercial viability but to enable councils to authorise short-term low-service camping facilities to specifically cater to music events and festivals under s. 68 of the Local Government Act 1993. While many showground trusts are developing management plans, to pursue “change of use” rights (see Amor 2010; Feliu 2014; News ABC 2015; R&S Muller Enterprise 2014), enabling them to accommodate freedom camping under the PCG regulation, it is only due to their total land area being relatively large that they can gain some modest economies of scale based on-site densities described at conditions 1 and 2 above. For these trusts, the supplemental income derived from camping is deemed satisfactory but as a stand-alone sustainable commercial venture, the restrictive densities would render the move questionable.

Non-viability continues to generate instability within the camping policy arena as pro-freedom camping advocates lobby government for regulatory reform. This contrasts commercial operator lobbies seeking to use the existing constraining legislation as a shield to protect their livelihoods.

Through a recent position paper the commercial industry associations puts the case:

Provision of services for free, or at rates in the vicinity of $10 - $15 per night as requested by some RV travellers, is not possible. Such rates do not reflect the business costs associated with maintenance, staffing, provision of water, electricity and sewerage services, and compliance with government regulation. The unrealistic demands of a small sector of the travelling public, who want free camping facilities and services to be provided by councils in urban areas in direct competition with the commercial sector, are leading to an erosion of this important tourism sector (CCIA 2015a, pp. 1-2).
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

Outside of the direct lobbies, entrepreneurial opportunists aligned to pro-freedom principles are nurturing start-up web-based business to guide campers to freedom camping locations. By example, in June 2015 the Free Ranging Camping web site posted ‘332 MORE SITES scattered throughout QLD, TAS and SA. We have also been adding some new Showground listings for our members to view along with relevant information about them’ (Free Range Camping 2015).

1.5 Camping market segments – description and discourse

The market segments for commercial caravan park sites and freedom camping spaces are not mutually exclusive as swinging campers of various sub-segments frequent both style of camping place. Although sharing common camps, at times, the subsets are not homogeneous and nor are they static within their neo-tribes. They are, however, self and peer identified caravanners of several categories within the broad foundation to a total RVing market.

Grey nomad is the most prominent segment among freedom campers. This Australian colloquial term has general application to semi-retired, or retired people who enjoy a nomadic lifestyle travelling for all, or significant parts of the year (greater than 3 months). Grey nomads have taken their “nomad” title from their propensity to not stay in one place too long (DEEDI 2010), anecdotally ‘staying in regional centres to fulfil either a particular tourist experience, for rest and recuperation or for provisioning and making repairs’ (p. 4). Being aged 55 and over they use their retirement years as a time to experience travelling activities as empty-nesters once freed from the constraints of work and family commitments. They are trending toward long-term travellers, though not global nomads (Kannisto 2014; Richards & Wilson 2004) in an RV sense, who usually use a caravan, motorhome or converted bus as their base accommodation. Initially this segment’s prevalence was seasonally seen in northern states during the colder months of the southern Australia winter (Snowbirds) but with increasing baby-boomer retirements the grey nomads are now prominent travellers in Australia 365 days per year (Caldicott 2011a). The Caravan Industry Association Australia (CIAA 2015f), under its ‘Let’s Go Caravanning & Camping’ marketing brand capitalise on the snowbirding tradition to strongly advocate for the lifestyle – beyond the seasonal migration:

Let’s Go North is a great opportunity to promote caravanning and camping in Australia year-round. While most of Australians find winter a time to retreat inside with the heater

---

Tourism Research Australia uses the definition of grey nomad as visitors over 55 years or older (Mature aged visitors in Australia 2008). However, other agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Tourism Queensland define grey nomads as individuals aged 60 years or older (DEEDI 2010)
Appendix 1: Glossary of terms – descriptions and discourse

and the TV, Let’s Go North reminds consumers that the sun is still shining up north – and they should take advantage of it and follow the fun! (p. 1).

Grey nomads have mixed budgets and fund their travels through a range of sources but are, in the main, fully-aged pensioners, partially aged pensioners or self-funded retirees. Thus, with mostly fixed incomes, they are generally price-conscious shoestring travellers. The stereotypical image of grey nomads suggests they are not particularly sensitive to the social, cultural or physical environment in and through which they traverse. They are criticised for contributing little to the social, economic or environmental viability of destinations as many travel with fully equipped caravans or camper homes. However, Davis et al., (2009) argues for this stereotypical image of grey nomads to be challenged as grey nomads come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There is also a considerable degree of difference in the equipment carried, activities undertaken, time in regions and destinations of grey nomads. Grey nomads, despite frequently being presented as a homogenous group, within their own neo-tribe, are also far from this (Caldicott & Harris 2015b).

**Couples without children**, similar to grey nomads, are a further growing segment of empty-nesters represented by a slightly younger cohort, i.e. under 55 years of age and often still in some form of paid employment or self-employment or independently superannuated. Couples utilise similar modes of accommodation as grey nomads but are often travelling for shorter duration – sometimes as an exploratory experience before retirement and sometimes on extended long-service leave. As they explore caravanning they also explore freedom camping.

**Families with school-age children** is the traditional market for caravan and camping. This segment continues to be a mainstay for commercial caravan parks. However, they do also freedom camp and while still a small segment, they are a recognisable and growing freedom camping cohort (Bearup 2009; Hendry 2014). Duration of trip is often curtained to school holiday periods although some families are choosing to home-school while engaging in extended or gap-year travelling (Caldicott et al. 2014b; Parkes Champion-Post 2015). Many redeveloped caravan parks have specifically targeted families through the introduction of themed precincts: luxury cabins, ensuite caravan sites and more overly the introduction of specialist activity areas, in particular, waterparks and jumping pillows. The main form of accommodation for families is park cabins and caravans while some families, particularly international visitors using rental motorhomes from companies such as Britz-Maui, Hertz and Apollo for example, also freedom camp.
Young families with pre-school aged children are re-emerging as a significant segment within caravan and camping with modern camper-trailer configurations particularly suited to this experience seeker market. While at the opposite end of the family lifecycle to grey nomads, some young families are also engaging in travel with extended trip duration, often up to 12 months, before the children become of school-age and necessitate a more fixed location to facilitate traditional schooling regimes. Young families are noted to use a mix of commercial caravan park accommodation augmented with freedom camping options to reduce their accommodation costs thereby extending their travel time.

Solos, as single travellers, are an often neglected segment, particularly in terms of provisioning and marketing. It is also a growing cohort for the caravan and camping market (CCIA 2015b). While a small proportion of solos are lifetime soloists, ranging across the age spectrum, many solos simply choose to continue their nomadic lifestyle post the passing of their couple or grey nomad partner as previous travelling companion. In line with demographic projections of the general population, females often out-live their male counterparts and as such the solo travellers, particularly females, are an as yet unrealised market opportunity for RV vehicle and camping site suppliers ‘providing a value-driven consumer segment with specific needs’ (Salt 2013, p. 24). Solo travellers often feel disadvantaged in a commercial camping environment as standard caravan park tariffs are still geared toward rates that accommodate two persons. Confident solos, those with long camping experience and not particularly obsessed with security, therefore, often seek freedom camping options to mitigate these costs that they do not perceive as adding value to their camping experience. Solos will sometimes continue with the accommodation mode of their prior couple-life (i.e. towable caravan) but more often downsize to a campervan or small motorhome configuration as they become more aged or frail.

Vanpackers, are generally considered as the 18-30 year-old demographic of both domestic and international visitor. This segment often prefers the freedom of independent transport for their backpacking experience in Australia. They tend to use hired rental vans with high brand recognition such as Wicked, Jucy, Spaceship and Hippy Camper. The latter providing a direct link back to the nostalgia of freedom hippies of the 1960s and the ubiquitous VW Kombi campervan (Associated Press 2013; Harding 2013). Vanpackers, through their blatantly overt display, and on occasion disrespectful behaviours (Moore 2014; Woolley 2015), are generating considerable presence in the freedom camping political sphere. This unfavourable attention, particularly from the press, is causing unrest and resentment, not only between campers and host communities (McGregor 2014; Walker 2014) but also among other freedom camping neo-tribes (Caravanning News 2014).
Appendix 2: Methodology support materials

2.1 Letters of support from CIAA (CRVA)

Source: Lamont, S 2011, Letter of support, Caravan and Recreational Vehicle Association of Australia, Brisbane, Qld, Australia
Appendix 2: Methodology and supporting materials

Rod Caldicott

To: Rod Caldicott
Subject: FW: 'Draft' Research Proposal Docs

From: Michelle Weston [mailto:michelle@crva.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 4 July 2012 10:11 AM
To: Rod Caldicott
Cc: stuart@crva.com.au
Subject: RE: 'Draft' Research Proposal Docs

Hi Rod

I spoke to Stuart today (one of the first days he has been in the office in a couple of weeks) to get an update on your proposal.

Stuart has asked me to let you know that he took your proposal to the Research Committee. The Committee agreed that we should provide you with logistical support on this project including supplying contacts, introductions, and endorsements to assist in mitigating some of your physical costs. We are also happy to assist in the gathering of specific industry data on your behalf, and allow access to data already available or in the process of being collected.

Best of luck with your project, and we look forward to your published findings.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact Stuart to discuss their decision further.

Thanks

Regards

Michelle Weston
Finance & Administration Executive
Caravan, RV & Accommodation Industry of Australia (CRVA)

Phone: 07 3262 6566
Fax: 07 3262 9989
Email: michelle@crva.com.au
Website: www.experiencecaravanningandcamping.com.au

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Source: Weston, M (on behalf of Stuart Lamont), 2012, E-mail confirmation of logistics support, Caravan and Recreational Vehicle Association of Australia, Brisbane, Qld, Australia
2.2 Introduction letter to informants

[Date]

[Address 1]
[Address 1]
[Address 1]
[Address 1]

[Salutation]

Further to our conversation of [insert date], thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. As a PhD Candidate in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management at Southern Cross University my research interests centre on the phenomenon of freedom camping. Subsequently, I have a working title for a project that I trust also to be of interest to you.

The politics of freedom camping policy in regional Australia: Policy-making, planning and management implications for regional communities.

This project seeks to unravel how the values and interests of those individuals and agencies involved in the freedom camping public policy arena interact within institutional arrangements; particularly since the 1990s. This period is witness to significant shifts in RV supply and demand capabilities; raised social, environmental and political values in local communities; and, the introduction of new legislations (e.g. NSW Local Government Act 1993; Commonwealth Competitive Neutrality Policy Statement 1996; Tasmanian State-wide Directions Paper - Review of Council Recreational Vehicle Overnight Camping Services 2012). The project will extend my previous research on the lifecycle of caravan manufacturing and caravan parks in Australia (for details see http://works.bepress.com/rod_caldcott).

Broader caravanning interests for me stem back to Travellers Rest Caravan Park, my family’s business in the Whitsunday region; employment as Tourism Manager for Richmond Valley Council in northern NSW; and, engagement with the Campervan and Motorhome Club of Australia (CMCA) through the hosting of the 2003 Anniversary Rally in Casino, NSW, and subsequently the development of Australia’s first RV village, now Big 4 Casino Resort.

Through my private enterprise, local government and academic experiences I have developed strong interests in freedom camping; particularly the interest of recreational vehicle consumers, caravan park operators and government. Today, I invite you to engage with me in this research venture that will generate new understandings of the politics and practice implications for local communities in respect to the freedom camping phenomenon. This project will produce real and tangible results to assist in your deliberations as a key participant in local, state or federal policy activity on freedom camping.

The enclosed information statement contains further detail about the aims, objectives and projected outcomes of the study. Additionally there is detail on the expected time commitments for you as a participant. If the opportunity presents, I would be happy to make a formal presentation to your Board or Council at a future time.

I am very much looking forward to working with you on this exciting project. If further clarification is required please contact me.

Yours sincerely

Rod Caldicott
School of Tourism & Hospitality Management
rodr.caldecott@scu.edu.au, M. 0450 835752

It’s all about U

It’s all about U

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F. +61 26659 3035

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F. +61 75569 3035

The Hotel School Sydney
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NSW 2001 Australia
T. +61 28293 3000
F. +61 28293 3035
2.3 Information statement to informants

Dear [Insert name]

RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION STATEMENT

The politics of freedom camping policy in regional Australia: Policy-making, planning and management implications for regional communities

Research Aim: This study will describe, critically analyse and explain the public policy process concerning freedom camping in Australia generally, and more particular in the states of New South Wales and Queensland. It will provide an in-depth evidence-based understanding of decision-making processes, surrounding freedom camping politics at a community level.

Objectives:
- Describe the phenomenon of freedom camping in its contemporary national and international contexts.
- Discuss the historical development of freedom camping in Australia focusing particularly on elements of supply (e.g. land-use, legislation and policy) and demand (e.g. participation, travel patterns and motivations).
- Explain the policy process concerning freedom camping, with reference to public policy theories generally, and pressure groups, power, governance and institutions of the state specifically.
- Critically analyse how local government perceives, interprets and implements public policy affecting freedom camping?

Research Significance: Freedom camping is being fuelled by growing interests in the grey nomad lifestyle and a new wave of younger recreationalists. It is bringing new prominence to the caravanning sector, one largely under-represented in existing literature. Despite the current maturity and dimension of the caravanning industry internationally, with relatively low attention been paid to it as a tourism phenomenon, there is considerable scope to expand research into this rapidly expanding form of drive tourism (Hardy & Gretzel 2011; McClymont et al., 2011; Prideaux & McClymont 2006; Van Heerden 2008). Hence, this study addresses a substantive gap in the under-explored domain of caravanning research and will contribute to the theoretical and conceptual advancement of the literature with particular emphasis on policy and planning.

Benefit to Participants: As a contributor to the policy making process you will have access to data demonstrating where or how your individual interest community can benefit from the new knowledge that emanates from the study. With the hindsight of these findings it is posted that local government managers, political leaders and RV associations will be better informed regarding their positioning in the ‘camping’ market, both within their immediate locale and also within the broader social, economic, environmental and political environments in which they operate.

Participation/Consent: Your engagement will involve a personal interview of approximately one hour duration. Preferably, this will be conducted face-to-face at a time and place convenient to you. Alternatively, telephone or Skype arrangement can be made. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. If you wish to participate you should read the remainder of this information sheet before completing the enclosed Consent Form. This can be returned to me in a number of ways: electronically, via the reply paid envelope provided, personally when we meet before the interview, or during my attendance at the ARRVCF, where I shall be participating as an observer. If you chose not to participate in the research it would also be appreciated if you could indicate your intention directly with me, or by phone or e-mail through the contacts listed below.

Risk/Cost to Participant: This study has been evaluated as low risk to participants, with the primary risk being the loss of immediate productive time while participating in the interview. I trust this cost will be minimal and adequately compensated through future returns that you receive from your engagement.
The interview can be scheduled to your convenience. It may combine with commitments that you have to existing freedom camping network functions such as the ARRVCF to which I shall also be attending for observation purposes. There will be no need for you to provide any records that you are not comfortable with or authorised to discuss. All information provided by you will be treated in the strictest confidence with only information consented by you used in publication. All information held for this research will be stored securely and in de-identified form by the University for a period of seven (7) years. Only the researcher will have access to the information that you provide in its raw form.

**Information Dissemination:** The findings will be published in my PhD thesis and is also expected to be published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at academic, industry and RV consumer relevant conferences.

**Report Access:** All participants will be able to access the full thesis via the Southern Cross University library. The thesis will also be freely available on the Internet through the University’s electronic catalogues. Furthermore, if you wish to receive a summary of the research findings these can be provided directly to you. To take this option you must tick the required space at the end of the Consent Form and provide the email address to which you would like the results posted. As the findings may not be forthcoming for a period greater than two years, if you change the email address to which you would like the results provided please inform me of this change.

**Cooling off period:** Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and there will be no remuneration provided. You are free to withdraw from the research at any point, without giving reason for your decision. If you do wish to withdraw, however, you are encouraged to advise me as soon as possible.

**Communication:** If you have any enquiries regarding this research please do not hesitate to contact me or my principle supervisor at any time. The relevant details are as follows:

**Researcher - Rod Caldicott**
PhD Candidate  
School of Tourism and Hospitality Management  
Southern Cross University  
Lismore Campus  
Office Phone 02 6620 9589  
Mobile Phone 0450 658752  
Email rod.caldicott@scu.edu.au

**Supervisor – Professor John Jenkins**  
Chair of Academic Board  
Southern Cross University  
Lismore Campus  
Office Phone 02 66 209431  
Email john.jenkins@scu.edu.au

This research has been approved by the Southern Cross University Human Ethics Committee. The Ethics Approval Number is ECN-13-031. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research or the researcher, you should write to:

**The Ethics Complaints Officer**
Southern Cross University  
PO Box 157  
Lismore NSW 2450  
etics.lismore@scu.edu.au
2.4 Informant demographics - description and discourse

The demographic details of the 41 informants were recorded in an excel database. These indicators served as useful prompts and guides through the analysis. They are presented in Tables 25-27 below.

Table 26 - Informant distribution by levels of representation
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Qld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26 indicates 41 informants were selected from local, state and national levels of interest communities with a sovereignty distribution skew toward NSW (n=18) followed by Qld (n=15) and National (n=8). Local level interests (n=22) account for just over half of the representation.

Table 27 - Informant distribution by organisation function
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Governance level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Qld</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caravan Park</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Consultant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Department</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 27 indicates informants were selected from six levels of organisation function: Association; Caravan Park; Tourism Consultant; Local Business (other than Caravan Park); Local Government; and, State Government Department. Informants from Local Government and Associations provide the majority of representation. The distribution was divided between policy-level informants (n=13) and operations-level informants (n= 28).
Table 28 - Informant distribution by role, state representation and sector interests
Source: Author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>National</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proprietor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayor</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councilor</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations Officer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28 indicates informants were selected from eleven positional roles: Proprietor; Chief Executive; Chairperson; Director; Manager; Mayor; Councillor; Policy Officer; Regulations Officer, Project Officer; and, Tourism Officer. These informants were further categorised by their national (n=8) or state (n=33) representation. Finally, informants were categorised as representing Public Sector (n=22) or Private Sector (n=19) interests.
2.5 De-identified record of consent form
2.6 The path to power – emergent themes from data coding

Figure 34 - The path to power - emergent themes from the data coding  (Source: Author)
2.7 Ethics approval notification

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HREC)
HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE (HRESC)

NOTIFICATION

To: Professor John Jenkins/Mr Rod Caldicott
School of Tourism and Hospitality Management
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From: Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee
Division of Research, R. Block

Date: 28 February 2013

Project name: The politics of freedom camping policy in regional Australia; Policy-making, planning and management implications for regional communities.

Approval Number ECN-13-038

The Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee has established, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research – Section 5 Processes of Research Governance and Ethical Review, a procedure for expedited review and ratification by a delegated authority of the HREC.

Thank you for your expedited ethics application dated the 26 February 2013. This has been considered by the Chair pro tem of the HREC, Dr David Lloyd and has been approved. The Chair would like to commend you for submitting a clear and well-constructed ethics application which was a pleasure to read.

All ethics approvals are subject to standard conditions of approval. These should be noted by researchers as there is compliance and monitoring advice included in these conditions.

Ms Sue Kelly
HREC Administration
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Dr David Lloyd
Chair, pro tem, HREC
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Appendix 3: NSW Department of Planning circular: illegal camping

Illegal Camping

The purpose of this circular is to remind councils, event organisers, touring groups and others that, with limited exceptions, carrying out or providing for camping (eg. in campers, campervans, motorhomes or tents) on council or other land requires council approval.

Introduction
The NSW planning and local government legislation both have a role in the regulation of camping. Compliance with the regulatory requirements for camping in that legislation promotes camping that is safe, enjoyable, equitable and sustainable.

Approvals required for caravan parks and camping grounds
Under State Environmental Planning Policy No 21 – Caravan Parks (SEPP 21), the use of land within a local government area for a caravan park or camping ground may, unless prohibited by another plan, be carried out only with the development consent of the council. However, SEPP 21 does not require development consent for a caravan park or camping ground on land dedicated or reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NP&W Act).

In addition, operating a caravan park or camping ground is an activity requiring council approval under Section 68 of the Local Government Act 1993 (LG Act) unless excepted by the Local Government (Manufactured Home Estates, Caravan Parks, Camping Grounds and Moveable Dwellings) Regulation 2005 (LG Regulation 2005), other legislation or a local approve policy.

Approval to operate a caravan park or camping ground is usually subject to a condition that the park or ground must be designed, constructed, maintained and operated in accordance with the relevant requirements of the LG Regulation 2005. It contains requirements for minimum size for a caravan park, dwelling site and camp site sizes, setbacks, roads, utility services, fire hose reels, shower and toilet facilities, laundry facilities, management and other matters.

Special provision is made in the LG Regulation 2005 for operating ‘primitive camping grounds’. This type of camping ground is generally remote from urban areas, and under the Regulation is required to have only a limited range of facilities. Requirements include that the ground must be provided with a water supply, toilet and refuse disposal facilities as specified in the approval for the ground. Such fire fighting facilities as may be specified in the approval are also to be provided.

Normally the installation of campers, campervans or tents in a caravan park or primitive camping ground, and the installation of campervans or tents in other camping grounds, does not require council approval. The installation of campers, campervans, tents and annexes in caravan parks and camping grounds must, however, comply with the relevant requirements under the LG Regulation 2005 (eg. see clause 132 regarding primitive camping grounds and clauses 161-173 regarding other camping grounds and caravan parks). For example, certain separation distance requirements apply for reasons of safety and privacy.

Section 78A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 allows an applicant (other than the Crown) in a single development application to apply to use land for a caravan park or camping ground, and operate a caravan park or camping ground.

1 For example, an approval under Section 68 of the LG Act is not required for land the LG Regulation 2005 does not apply to, a caravan park or camping ground on land dedicated or reserved under the NP&W Act 1974.

2 A local government policy adopted under Part 3 of the LG Act may specify the following the circumstances in which a person would be exempt from the need to obtain a particular approval of the Council for activities governed by the LG Act, the criteria which a Council must take into consideration in determining whether to grant or refuse an approval under the LG Act, and other matters relating to approved.
Temporary caravan parks and camping grounds

A temporary caravan park or camping ground requires development consent and approval to operate. As with permanent parks and grounds relevant requirements in the LG Regulation 2005 concerning tents, caravans and annexes in caravan parks and camping grounds must also be complied with.

Before granting consent to a development application, or approving a LG Act application, for a temporary caravan park or camping ground, a council should be satisfied that for the duration of the park's or ground's operation provision of a water supply and toilet and refuse facilities will be adequate. Councils should also assess whether firefighting facilities are needed and whether any other facility or measure may necessary to promote the health, safety and amenity of the occupiers.

Under the LG Regulation 2005, a temporary caravan park or camping ground can be approved for a period of 6 weeks or less, solely in connection with use of the land for a sporting, recreation or cultural event, does not have to be designed, constructed, maintained and operated in accordance with Subdivisions 1-6 of Division 3 of Part 3 of the Regulation (see clause 73(3)). This means, for example, that the park or ground may be excused from having permanent amenities.

Problems caused by illegal camping

Councils are encouraged to be proactive in preventing illegal camping. The reasons for this include:

- If inadequate facilities are provided or the standard of operation is unsatisfactory, the health and safety of campers will not be assured. This may be especially so in relation to fire safety;
- Use of an illegal caravan park or camping ground may cause disturbance to adjoining land users, especially if there are adjoining residential areas. This disturbance may be associated with noise, scattering of rubbish, or inadequate toilet facilities or provision for greywater disposal. Environmental damage may also eventuate;
- Illegal camping subjects commercial businesses running approved caravan parks and camping grounds to unfair competition, contrary to Competitive Neutrality Guidelines. This is the case even if the unauthorised camping is not provided free or with subsidisation. Under the local government regulations, caravan park approval holders are required to provide certain facilities and comply with an extensive range of standards related to health, safety and amenity considerations.

Examples of enforcement options

If development for a caravan park or camping ground occurs on land where that use is prohibited, or requires but does not have development consent, a council may initiate the giving an order no 1 under section 121B of the EP&A Act to cease that use.

This order could be given to the owner of the premises or person using the premises for the purpose of a caravan park or camping ground (eg, the operator). Normally, before an order is given, the person who gives it must give a notice of intention in accordance with 121H.

Given the provisions in section 625 of the LG Act, if a person operates a caravan park or camping ground without required prior approval under Part 1 of Chapter 7 of the LG Act, that person is guilty of an offence. Court action could be taken in respect of this. The maximum penalty the court may impose for an offence of this type is 50 penalty units ($5,500).

Council approval not required for certain exceptions

There are a number of circumstances in which camping in caravans, campervans or tents elsewhere than in a caravan park or camping ground does not require council approval under the LG Act.

1. Exceptions under LG Regulation 2005

For land elsewhere than in a caravan park or camping ground, the LG Regulation provides the following conditional and unconditional exemptions from the requirement for council approval.

Conditional exemptions

Under the LG Regulation 2005 council approval is not required for the installation of:

- up to two caravans, campervans or tents on any land (with the landowner's permission), provided they are not occupied for more than two days at a time and are not occupied for more than 60 days (in total) in any 12 month period;
- one caravan or campervan on land on which there is a dwelling house, provided the caravan or campervan is occupied by the owner of the dwelling house or members of the household, and the caravan or campervan is maintained in a safe and healthy condition;
- a caravan or campervan on agricultural land, provided the caravan or campervan is occupied by seasonal workers on the land.

Unconditional exceptions

The LG Regulation 2005 (clause 78) provides that installing a caravan, campervan or tent on a Crown reserve or in any State forest does not require LG Act approval. Instead, the Crown Lands Act 1989 and the Forestry Act 1916 apply respectively.

Information about camping in Crown reserves and where to find Crown land holiday parks is available from the NSW Land and Property Management Authority (see www.caravanandcampingsw.com.au). Enquiries about camping in NSW state forests may be made to Forests NSW (T. 1300 655 687) or see www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests/recreation.
2. Other exceptions

National Parks
The use of caravan parks, campervans and tents on lands reserved or dedicated under the NP&W Act is regulated under that Act. Approval under the LG Act is not required for those uses on those lands.

Information on camping opportunities within lands subject to the NP&W Act may be obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (see www.environment.nsw.gov.au and select Visiting a Park).

Roadside rest areas
Camping in a roadside rest area may be permitted, unless a ‘no camping’ or ‘no overnight stays’ sign has been placed there by a council or the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) (or other relevant authority). Enquiries about the use of rest areas along roads administered by the RTA may be made to that agency.

Further information
For further information on the regulation of caravan parks and camping grounds see the Department of Planning website at www.planning.nsw.gov.au


If you have queries about this Planning Circular please contact the Department’s Information Centre 02 9228 6333 or email information@planning.nsw.gov.au.

Authorised by:
Sam Haddad
Director-General
NSW Department of Planning

Important note: This circular does not constitute legal advice. Users are advised to seek professional advice and refer to the relevant legislation, as necessary, before taking action in relation to any matters covered by this circular.

@ State of New South Wales through the Department of Planning
www.planning.nsw.gov.au

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Source: Department of Planning 2010, Illegal camping, Planning Circular PS 10-019 New South Wales Government, Sydney, NSW, Australi