

Grey Nomads come for Jacaranda

Motorhomes and caravans packed the greyhound and jockey club areas again this year. One hundred and twenty-two registrations with 217 people visited Jacaranda for the motorhome rally this year. They mostly stayed for 7 nights and toured, shopped and were entertained to the full for every day of their stay.



This year the visitors, on receipted income into the town, spent over \$78,000 and raised nearly \$1560.00 for the Westpac Helicopter Appeal through raffles, electrical tagging, donations and an Opp Shop Pre-Loved Fashion Parade with the sale of opp shop items after. All thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and showed their added support by coming dressed in red and yellow with the winners for their outfits gaining a bottle of wine each.

Five town tours highlighted the beauty of not only the jacarandas, but the many other trees that line the streets of Grafton. The tour also included our historical buildings and a stop for tea at Corcoran Park which included scones, jam and cream



The Costa group took two bus tours through their blueberry farms at Corindi, giving information about the business and the growing of the bushes for maximum fruiting. Everyone was given a punnet of blueberries or raspberries on their departure. A visit to the woodworking exhibition rounded this half day tour off.

The Wahgungurry alpaca farm at Southgate, highlighted the alpaca industry in Australia, showing off their wonderful view of the Clarence and resulted in many alpaca products being bought. Three alpacas walked among the visitors while Pauline gave an excellent run down on the industry, and at the same time, Lorraine showed her skills in spinning the yarn.

This year we sent three tour buses to New Italy for the glass firing demonstration and museum, thence onto Nimbin for a look at this iconic town before heading back to Grafton. It was a long day, but all seemed to enjoy the new tour.

Tours to the McLeod Bell Collection was very well received as was that to Lanbruks Olive Farm at Carrs Peninsular.

However, the most popular of all, and the most difficult to get seats for was the Lower Clarence Foodies tours. Only one bus can do this tour at a time because of the limited space at each venue. The first visit to the Clarence River Fishermen's Coop where the catch from early that morning was being processed.



The process from catch to the shop was explained and a demonstration of the filleting process given. After this stop it was back to Botero's where the processing of coffee was shown and demonstrated, and the trip finished off with their delicious coffee and cake.

A trip to Yamba ended up at Nicholson's Fine Foods at the industrial estate had Peter demonstrating, and giving samples of the food using his products to the visitors. Many were amazed at how tasty they could make their food using Peter's products and guidance with the preparation of foods. After their tastings, the Yamba Coop provided a great deal on seafood and chicken burgers which were devoured before heading back to Grafton with very full tummies and heavy shopping bags.

On Tuesday night it is tradition for the Jacaranda Party to join us for a sausage sizzle. This year we had the Junior Princesses as well as the Queen, princesses and associated members of the committee. The mayor, his wife and son also enjoyed the night along with entertainment by Double Trouble.



The Clarence Valley Ramblers have been organising this event for 13 years now. The economic benefit to Grafton is enormous, over \$78,000 last year, but our visitors also benefit from all that is on offer for them in their week with us.

Volunteers from the Ramblers are hosts for the week and work to ensure our visitors have fun, and enjoy a full week of activities while based at the Greyhound Track where they are sited for the week.

A Welcome to Country and dancing by indigenous student from South Grafton Primary school starts the week off for everyone.

Sixteen tour buses will showcase the Clarence Valley, as well as some buses going to New Italy, Nimbin and blueberrying on the farms of Corindi.

Booked out very early were the two Foodies tours to the Lower Clarence with visits to the Maclean Fishermen's Coop to see the processing of the previous night's catch. Botero's in Maclean is the next stop for delicious coffee and cake and a tour of the coffee processing out the back. A trip to Yamba will feature samples Nicholson's Fine Foods at the industrial estate before finishing off with lunch at the Yamba Fishermen's Coop.

Closer to Grafton there are tours to the alpaca farm at Southgate, Lanbruk's olives and museum, Alamy Creek School, the regional art gallery, the model trains and the woodworking exhibition in South Grafton.

Trades people from Grafton explained many aspects that could benefit the wandering nomads. TV aerials, 3-way fridges, 12-volt tools, CB communications and Geowiki instruction were shown and had their use explained from the basics to the more involved. Col Drayton from the Grafton Fire Brigade identified problems and fixes for fire safety in the mobile homes. The work and effort of these trades people is very much appreciated and generates business for them as well as assisting the visitors to the rally. We are also grateful to the businesses that have made donations towards our raffles and other activities. Their generosity is much appreciated.

Grey nomads know how to have fun and enjoy themselves. As quite a few of this year's visitors are back again after last year, we can only assume that they had a ball last time. They have enjoyed the Clarence Valley and with the help of John from the Tourist office, we know that many will return and take in more of the attractions and natural beauty that the area has to offer.

This year we had about 80 first timers, and all have said what a great time they had, and have expressed their eagerness to return next year. Grafton can only continue to benefit by their presence, and the Jacaranda Festival makes it all a bonus for all.