

QUEANBEYAN AGE COLUMN 22 FEBRUARY 2008

Our 'lost' Visitors: As mentioned previously in this column, 150,000 people visit Queanbeyan each year, spending \$26 million in the City. This is in danger of significant reduction – simply because visitors are finding it almost impossible to park.

The Visitor Centre car park, with its one and two hour limits, has been ideal for visitors to get their bearings and plan their stay. Unfortunately for visitors, this car park has, for the past several weeks, been largely taken over as a result of the NSW State Office Block construction. Many of these vehicles park and stay all day.

Visitors are daily observed driving around the car park and then heading out of town – perhaps taking their dollars with them. Others complain bitterly to staff about the lack of parking. We know that visitor numbers to the Centre have dropped significantly, just when we historically expect a large influx of 'grey nomads'.

We do not expect any easing of this in the near future, particularly when the State Office Block fit-out teams arrive, and we have been told there is little that can be done to ease the situation. Whether it will get any better when the building is complete, and 300 plus staff occupy the building, is problematic.

We have been told the building will supply a little over 100 staff car parking spaces plus 8 visitor car parks. If, as we understand, the bulk of the staff car spaces are required for overnight parking of Government cars, then the problems will escalate as staff members arrive for work.

The current remodelling of Lowe Street car park has temporarily exacerbated the problem. Whilst this will increase the numbers of car parks in the vicinity, it appears caravaners will suffer from the loss of the previous long vehicle parking area – a rare parking opportunity for such vehicles in Queanbeyan's CBD.

We ask residents, shoppers and business owners to be patient with visitors and, given the opportunity, help them find suitable parking areas. Council has, for example, opened a temporary car parking facility in the Showgrounds near St Gregory's School. The Morisset Street car park is little used, and is large enough for temporary caravan parking. Visitors are likely to be unaware of these areas as they are a little distance from the Main Streets.

Queanbeyan Business Council has written to City Council asking that parking, including visitor parking, be included in the current CBD Master Plan – even if it means constructing a multi level car park and some form of paid parking.

The CBD Master Plan will almost certainly suggest solutions. In the meantime, let us make space for our visitors so they can enjoy everything this City has to offer.

Let us know about your event: Queanbeyan Visitor Information Centre is the official recorder of public events in the City. Not only do we keep a regularly updated events page on the Visitor Centre web site www.visitqueanbeyan.com.au , but also Queanbeyan City Council links directly to this page from their web site www.gcc.nsw.gov.au . If we have the details, then it is easy for people to become informed. If we don't, then you may be missing a great (and free) marketing opportunity for your event.

We also have our electronic signboard at the front of our Visitor Information Centre that is visible to literally thousands of vehicles every day. This may also be a useful marketing opportunity for your event.

To register an event, simply contact Sandra at Queanbeyan Visitor Information Centre on 6299 7037 or tourist@queanbeyanbusinesscouncil.com.au .

Queanbeyan Business Council Annual General Meeting: Tuesday, 26 February at Queanbeyan Golf Club starting at 4 pm. Please RSVP to Simon Mitchell-Taverner on 6299 7152 or simon@queanbeyanbusinesscouncil.com.au .