

School camp bans impact

Operators: cancellations spell disaster

REGION
By EVERARD HIMMELREICH

A SOUTH-WEST school camp venue has warned the threatened cancellation of many school excursions during the forthcoming school term will have a huge impact on small regional towns.

Matthew Bowker from the Kangarooie camp at Princetown said if venues lost three to four camps during the next school term they would not survive.

Mr Bowker said the camp venues would struggle to pay food and other service providers if they lost a handful of big bookings.

The camps are under threat

because Victorian teachers and support staff have decided not to work beyond 38 hours a week as part of an industrial campaign for higher pay and better conditions.

Mr Bowker said he had lobbied both Australian Education Union president Meredith Peace and State Higher Education Minister Peter Hall, alerting them to the potential impact of the dispute on small towns.

He feared at least one forthcoming camp at Kangarooie involving 190 Melbourne students was in danger of being cancelled.

Its cancellation would deny Kangarooie about \$45,000 in income, he said.

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A spokeswoman for another south-west camp venue, Camp Cooriemungle near Timboon, said any cancellations would have a big impact on the camp's income during the first school term.

Camp Cooriemungle co-owner Charlene Payne said the teachers' action had prompted some schools not to stay overnight at the adventure camp.

She said many primary schools had also postponed their excursions and many year

7 camps shifted from the first term to a tentative booking in the second term, when it was hoped the ban on overtime would have ended.

Ms Payne said the impact would be most significant in the first term of 2013, which was traditionally the busiest time of the year for school camps.

A spokesman for another south-west school camp venue, the Moyne Shire-owned Southcombe Lodge at Port Fairy, said there had been no cancellations so far of school camps.

He said he expected to know of any camp cancellations a few weeks after school resumed.

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Art blossoms in the sun

Warrnambool artist Kelly O'Brien gets creative on the Civic Green yesterday. 130125AS07
Picture: AARON SAWALL

WARRNAMBOOL
By MATT NEAL

FIRST it was on, then it was off, then it was on again, but in the end nothing could stop the final session of Arts On The Grass.

While weather is always a factor in outdoor activities, organisers of the public

paint-off series were keen to make sure their last event of the summer went ahead after experiencing rain-outs at the start of the season.

Fortunately the rain held off and about 200 people kicked back in the sunshine as they watched artists Tracey Head and Kelly O'Brien create artworks in two hours, while

Louie Clancey and Darren Ely provided accompanying music. As for the wind, tent pegs held the easels in place.

WAG curator of exhibitions and outreach Gareth Colliton said the series was "very successful".

"The crowd numbers came close to doubling last year despite the weather being

dodgier early on," he said.

The success has spurred interest from other councils and groups interested in setting up a similar activity.

"We'll be meeting with these councils and groups to see if we can expand or add to or improve it for next summer," Mr Colliton said.

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Clashing lines spark alarm, blackout

REGION
By MATTHEW O'TOOLE

CLASHING power lines near Kirkstall caused a widespread blackout but no fire on a day of high alert for emergency services yesterday.

Two Country Fire Authority (CFA) brigades responded at 11.09am after reports of power

lines sparking and swinging in strong winds on Tarrone Lane. The incident caused the zone substation in Portland to be knocked off line, affecting about 9000 Powercor customers.

Powercor spokesman Drew Douglas said the power was back on in about an hour but only after crews first patrolled the lines to check for other faults before the

substation was restarted, which was standard practice on total fire ban days.

Shortly after the Kirkstall incident, a grassfire broke out about a kilometre east of Tarrington. Two CFA brigades controlled and blacked out the fire within 30 minutes.

Also yesterday, a grassfire on Chrome Road at Yulecart,

west of Hamilton, caused some concern because of the wind, CFA operations officer Bruce Farquharson said.

"There was some anxiousness for a few minutes as it was quite windy," Mr Farquharson said.

The fire was controlled within 25 minutes after five brigades attended. The cause had not been determined.

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