

HOST HANDOUT # 6



Approaching your local council

We get lots of questions from hosts who aren't sure about talking to their local council about accepting visitors. So we've created this handout to help you be prepared!

- 1) Do some research. There is a lot of information online. Your property will have a certain 'zoning' which will dictate what you can seek council approval for. Most councils consider camping as 'camping/caravan park' or farmstays as cottages or bed and breakfast accommodation. Ask your council if they have a definition for 'bush', 'nature based' or 'primitive camping' if you don't want to provide many facilities. Also ask your council if approval is required at all if you intend to just accept self contained visitors. At Youcamp, we are lobbying councils and governments to make setting up a small campground easier for hosts.
- 2) Exemptions. There are some exemptions to needing formal approval from a local council. You may decide to just accept 'donations' rather than fees or you may fit within a planning exemption. Ask for our state by state summaries on camping regulations for Australia.
- 3) When you approach your local council, you'll need to have a clear idea of what you intend to set up. Think about easy and safe access for visitors, how they will leave your property in the event of an emergency and what risks you need to manage.
- 4) Toilets are the biggest issue when it comes to camping and campgrounds. There are environmental and health considerations to manage. There are two approaches - guests provide their own toilets or you provide a toilet for their use. Self contained guests are increasing in numbers - many motorhomes and caravans come equipped with a toilet, water and often showers. Depending on the storage capacity, these travellers can stay at sites with no facilities for days and even weeks. They refill water as required and use public 'dump points' to release waste from their storage tank (also known as a toilet cassette). Traditional campers in tents and campervans can also be self contained with their own water and portable camping toilet (lots on the market). Some hosts provide or hire out portable camping toilets to guests.
- 5) In more remote sites, wet and dry composting toilets are affordable and require less energy to run. In each state, you can find a list of accredited composting toilet systems. These have already met health standards so your local council can approve their use. Some hosts buy second hand portaloos and set them up permanently. In some sites away from water courses, you may be able to have a pit toilet approved.
- 6) Depending on your site, councils require a plan to show how you will deal with a major flood or bushfire event. These don't have to be long and detailed plans - they should be practical and reflect the uniqueness of your site. Include advice from your local fire service authority or local flood reports and show how you will evacuate visitors.
- 7) We encourage new hosts to talk to existing hosts about how they handled local council approvals (use the 'enquiry' button to send a message). We also encourage hosts who need support to engage a local planner who can negotiate and do all the paperwork required by your local council.