

YES! TO MY BACKYARD

Rural land holders are discovering sharing their piece of paradise with city folk can be a win-win!

An enterprising NSW South coast landholder and author has started a great idea facilitating country camping for city dwellers called *You Camp*.

For landholders willing to have visitors camp overnight or a designated period on their land, it can be not only lucrative but enjoyable. For city campers who don't wish to stay in formal caravan parks or camping grounds, it's an ideal option. While free campsites are available around the country, they are not always convenient or have the privacy and facilities some landholders are now offering.

James Woodford, the co-founder of *You Camp*, explains how he started his company.

'My colleague Prue Bartlett and I own land down on the south coast of NSW and we always loved camping there with our family and friends. We thought it's crazy there's all this empty rural land and great camping sites on these properties with people wanting to access them and landholders wanting to make a bit of extra cash, so

we thought let's work out a way to bring everybody together.

'So that's how it started in 2013 so we've been working closely with state and local governments to streamline the rules around this. It is legal everywhere in Australia to camp on private land but the rules and regulations in different parts of the country vary. In some places it's very easy in others it's much harder and we just want to see this regulated in a much more sensible way.

'There is a registry of places on the *You Camp* website but initially it started out as travelers who had a fully self contained campervan or caravan just wanting a safe place to park and as they had all self contained amenities the landholder didn't need to supply anything. Then we found if that worked, landholders might decide to go to council and put in an application to put in some amenities on the property, and some might go even further than that, like putting up luxury glamping tents, or something more permanent like a bunkhouse or shed or retro caravans, there's a whole gamut of different offerings.

'Charges can vary but the average seems to be ten to twenty dollars per person per night. Of course if some people have beautiful river or beach frontage, good fishing or such, they can charge more.

'People liaise with *You Camp* in the first instance after checking they are operating legally, so first port of call is to talk to their council and see what requirements are needed to list on a site like ours. People search for where they want to go, what they want to do, and the kind of rules which apply. The reasons people love camping on private land is they can do things like take their dog, or bring their horse, or have a bigger fire than you are restricted to in a public campground.

'There's often a lot of trouble with people parking illegally in some areas so this is a way of solving that problem without pushing them away by offering travelers an affordable option that's not in a restrictive formal caravan park or camping ground. *You Camp* charges the guests a ten percent booking fee, and the landholders



pay a two percent administrative fee on each booking. Mostly people find us online, where we have an extensive help centre with information and details and advice and photos.

'We're really wanting more landowners to get involved in this as it's such a great way to bridge that gap between rural, regional and urban areas. We find a lot of farmers really enjoy having city people come and stay. And not only can they charge for accommodation they can charge for things like farm tours, all kinds of things.

'We find that if nothing is provided for people they drive straight through. Some Councils are less helpful than others. It's like when a new idea starts, like Uber, or AirBnB so governments and councils are not sure how to manage this and we encourage them to get in touch with us.

'We've worked with several councils, as the last thing we want is people operating illegally. Landholders need to get insurance and we can direct them to a broker who has affordable insurance that covers campers.'

Sounds an ideal way for visitors passing through to stay longer, see the sights, and spend a little cash in town, and maybe find a place they want to settle or retire. And for landholders it's a chance to share their space, earn a little cash, and share the secrets of life away from the big smoke.



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