



TEMPLATE FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT OVERFLOW CAMPING POLICY

Prepared By The Caravan Industry
Association Western Australia (Inc)

PREAMBLE

All Local Governments are encouraged to prepare a sustainable Overflow Policy. We understand that no Policy will be perfect however, use of this document as a guide should assist in promoting a Policy in which the Local Government can maximise operational efficiencies and tourism benefits without detriment to local licenced caravan park facilities.

The need to implement a Policy arises solely when tourist demand exceeds the capacity of local licenced caravan parks resulting in the risk of lost tourist business throughout the town and wider region.

The purpose of a Policy is to aid Local Government to establish a protocol of referral between local licenced Caravan Parks, the Local Authority, the relevant Tourist Association, and newly arrived visitors to be directed to overflow facilities.

The benefit of having a Policy is to ensure the travelling public has an opportunity to stay within their town or region entirely. An effective Policy will result in caravan park owners and operators benefiting also at times of peak demand as alternative accommodation arranges can be made via referral to another defined and managed location.

The absence of a Policy can promote illegal camping and the inappropriate use of community facilities resulting in a potentially negative outcome (pollution, environmental damage and visual eyesore) for the local community and businesses.

OBJECTIVE

- Develop a means of referral between local caravan park owners and the appropriate tourist association to maximise operational efficiencies during a period of peak tourist demand.
- Identify and licence specific private or public sites within a Local Authority to ensure that the travelling public has the opportunity to be accommodated when existing licenced caravan parks are operating at or near capacity.
- Ensure that the operation of overflow caravan parks does not impact on the viability of licenced caravan parks.
- Ensure that there is a consistency in regulation so that all overflow caravan parks operate and meet the same standard and price structure.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

All overflow caravan parks whether on private or public land should be developed and approved by the Local Authority with an Annual Licence as a Temporary Caravan Park using the “Transit Caravan Park” requirements for ablution and laundry facilities under the Caravan and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 (as amended).

All land (private or public) which is considered physically suitable/capable of accommodating an overflow caravan park should be considered, regardless of its zoning under the provisions of the local town planning scheme.

OVERFLOW SITES WITHIN A PERMANENT CARAVAN PARK POLICY

The use of available land within existing licenced caravan parks needs to be identified prior to any additional private or public overflow sites being licenced.

Consistent with purely overflow parks, any portion of a commercial park being used for overflow accommodation can comply with the “Transit Caravan Park” provisions only.

The land identified within the local licenced caravan park facilities should be included on the annual park licence as “overflow sites”.

It will be the sole responsibility of the caravan park operator to determine what sites of the licenced caravan park are to be used and when.

SUGGESTED POLICY PROVISIONS

1.0 The policy needs to apply to all licenced overflow caravan parks. As a general rule the Local Authority should identify not less than four sites suitable to be licenced. Each Local Authority will have different locational attributes and land which is either publicly or privately owned. Regardless of ownership or zoning all sites should be considered and a strategic review of possible suits needs be undertaken in consultation with commercial park owners/managers and all recognised stakeholders.

As a general guide, overflow parks should:

- Not be required for any other use during the local peak tourist season;
- Already have or have the capacity to be developed with the essential facilities required for a “Transit Park” (i.e. ablutions and laundry);
- Be in close proximity to the town centre or neighbourhood shopping centre;
- Have suitable/safe access to accommodate all types of motorhomes/RV/caravans; and
- Retain a level of general amenity to ensure a pleasant but not extended stay (i.e. commercial caravan parks should remain a more desirable holiday destination).

2.0 The overflow caravan parks will only be opened upon direction from the Local Authority, once an inspection by an Environmental Health Officer has been conducted and the overflow caravan park meets legislative requirements (Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997) – Refer to ‘Suggested Protocol’ below for guidance.

To avoid a surplus of overflow sites being available, sites within local licenced caravan parks should be opened first followed by external overflow parks. It is suggested that an appropriate order be agreed upon by all stakeholders to ensure a sustained outcome. A rotational roster from year to year may be required if privately owned overflow parks are considered.

3.0 The opening dates for the approved overflow caravan parks will be determined by the Local Authority and formal advice will be provided to the overflow caravan park operator.

A written licence will be provided for the time that the overflow caravan park is operating (other than for licenced caravan parks which have the overflow sites contained within the annual park licence). The expiry date on the licence is an approximate closing date. Direction will be given in writing when the overflow caravan park is to close.

The Local Authority in conjunction with the relevant local tourist association will need to determine opening and closing times based on advice from the local licensed caravan parks as to the number of sites being required.

- 4.0 The Local Authority needs to be responsible for the monitoring and enforcement of the legislative and licence conditions of the local Town Planning Scheme and Caravan and Camping Grounds Regulations.

All overflow caravan parks must comply with these requirements whilst the overflow caravan park is in operation. The Local Authority should as a condition of the licence advise that any breach of the Scheme or Regulation may result in the revoking of any licence at any time. This includes existing licenced caravan parks.

- 5.0 Regardless of whether the site is confined within a private or public overflow park a maximum of seven (7) nights stay within any three (3) month period at the overflow caravan park should apply.

Any person should be permitted to stay for a total of seven (7) days; however these days do not have to be consecutive. Where possible an overflow park operator should be required to provide a copy of the bookings on a weekly basis of all guests to the Local Authority.

Each Local Authority would need to consider the above in consultation with local licensed caravan park operators and the supply and demand characteristics of the area.

- 6.0 To ensure a high level of effective communication between all stakeholders the overflow caravan park operators are to inform the relevant tourist association twice daily. Given preferred check in/out times - once in the morning at 10.30am and once in the afternoon at 3.30pm of their occupancy status.

- 7.0 It should be up to the discretion of the overflow caravan park operator if they wish to accept animals, including dogs. If an overflow caravan park does accept animals then there are legislative requirements contained in the Caravan Parks and Camping Grounds Regulations 1997 that must be met.

It should be a condition of the annual licence that these requirements are provided in writing to the park guest.

- 8.0 It has been noted that some guests within caravan parks (particularly those on extended travel) undertake part-time commercial (hobby) activities from their site. Any guest staying within an overflow park is not permitted to conduct commercial or profit making business activities within an overflow caravan park.

- 9.0 The marketing or referral of business of an overflow park or portions of a caravan park with an overflow capacity is not permitted other than through the relevant tourist association during the period these facilities are available. Direction signage is allowed, as long as it complies with the scheme provisions of the relevant Local Authority.

- 10.0 One major benefit of a designated and licenced overflow park is the management of waste disposal. It needs to be a condition of the licence that all waste disposal including, sullage and refuse, is the responsibility of the overflow caravan park operator.

- 11.0 The issue of security and safety is vital to ensure all guests have a pleasant experience within an overflow park. As such a caretaker needs to be allowed to reside at the overflow caravan park for the term of the temporary licence.

SUGGESTED PROTOCOL

The co-ordination of which overflow park is open and the number of available sites should be undertaken by the tourist association to avoid administrative costs being incurred by the Local Authority. A single point of contact for travellers also ensures consistent information is being provided.

Example of implementing the Policy Protocol

“A traveller is contacting licenced caravan parks to find out they are fully booked. In response they are requested to add their name to the caravan parks waiting list but told to ring the tourist association (i.e. local Visitor Centre) every few days to see if any overflow park has or will be opening.

In the mean time the caravan park owners and operators are in contact with the tourist association and Local Authority and collectively the decision to open an overflow park is made.

When travellers on the waiting list call back (to the tourist association) they are advised that park “x” is now open as an overflow and from there on all correspondence is between the traveller and the owner of that overflow park.”

The Local Authorities’ main role, if not providing an overflow site themselves, is the issuing and monitoring of any licence.

The opening of an overflow park is not considered appropriate until such time as all existing licenced caravan park facilities within the town are fully booked (including overflow areas within existing parks) and there is a reasonable* waiting list for each park.

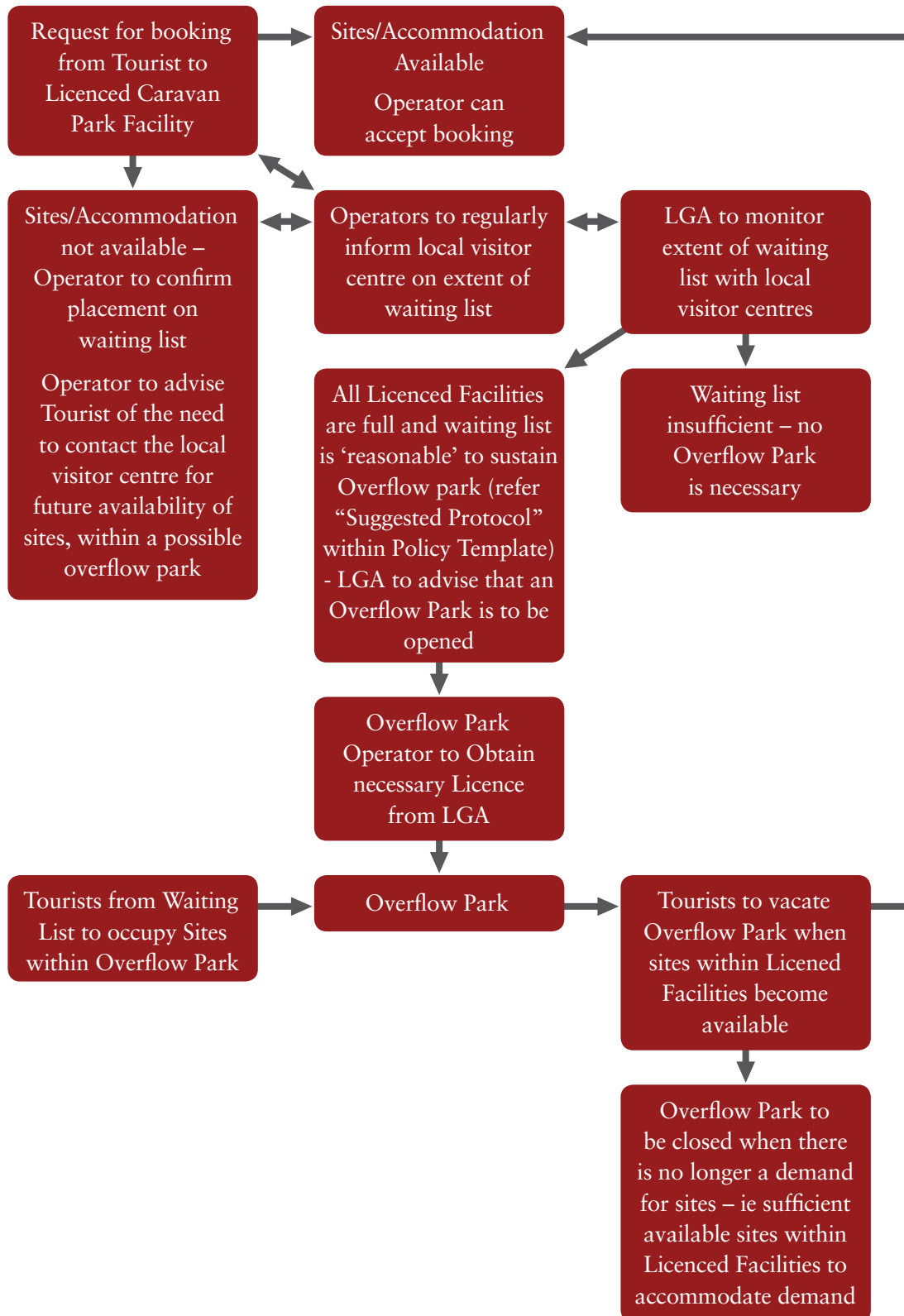
Included as Figure 1 is a typical “flowchart” detailing the implementation of the suggested protocol.

PRICE STRUCTURE

To ensure that a price competitive market still remains the suggested nightly rate for a site within an overflow caravan park should to be determined by the relevant Local Authority in conjunction with local licenced facilities and be consistent with the average nightly/ weekly rate within the area.

Figure 1–Protocol Flow Chart

Note–prior to implementing this flow chart the relevant Local Authority will need to identify its preferred private and/or public overflow caravan parks in accordance with Section 1.0 of this Policy Template.





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