

CUSTODIAN NEWSLETTER

Welcome to 2023 Edition 5

This edition's topic is *Maintaining the RV Park Grounds*

As you all know, first impressions matter when it comes to customers, and our RV Parks are no different. The guest experience starts when they drive in the front gate, or for many it starts when they are trying to locate the RV Park for the first time!

Our park network covers many different landscapes, from Southern Tasmania to Far North QLD and the Top End, and everything in between. Seasons pose varying issues for each of our parks, and if you have been seeing our recent posts you would realise that the challenge for our Custodians at Innisfail (one of the wettest places in Australia) is keeping the park open and functioning through even the North QLD 'dry' season.



Figure 1 Railton RV Park in winter (Michele Fielding V78727)



Figure 2 A frosty start at Temora (Tony Green S85165)



Figure 3 Grass fire near Batchelor RV Park (Brad Webb Q117982)

What is expected of you when you take on the Custodian role?

We understand that this is a volunteer role for the Club and that our members have a wide range of capabilities and capacities due to experience, age, and health. Even so, there is a minimum that we ask our Custodians to be able to undertake during their stay.

Grass management

Most of our parks are lawn based, with sites that have a grassed area and gravel roads that connect them. This has its own issues in terms of keeping grass alive in dry times, mowing during peak growth times, managing vehicles on grassed areas, wet times that cause bogging or slipping and weed control.

As examples:

- Port Pirie is totally gravel based because it is too difficult to keep grass alive during summer months.
- Charleville has a native grass base, which is not watered and therefore looks pretty crook through the dry winter months but requires little maintenance other than the occasional contractor mow.
- Our North QLD parks get substantial rain during the closed months and tend to keep getting rain through the winter months which provides great grass growing conditions.

Custodians are asked to keep these grounds in a tidy state, where people who are camping feel comfortable to park their rig and walk around the park. This usually means short grass (but not a bowling green). Cutting too low causes scalping, wears or breaks mower blades, can cause damage to the mowing deck, and can kick up stones that can damage RVs.



Figure 4 Lovely dry park at Ingham (Sally & Brad Webb Q135826)



Figure 5 Can be tough to mow at Ingham in the dry season!

Please advise if you are not confident with a ride-on mower. At handover the outgoing Custodian should provide some direction as to how the machine works and when it needs to be serviced. Some Custodians will even do the service for us if we provide the materials.



Figure 6 Gunnedah RV Park, slow growing grass in winter

Weed control

There are many different weed species across our country, and they appear seasonally depending on the local climate. Some weeds simply look out of place (marshmallow weed, thistles) whilst others will have foliage or seeds that cause pain or injury (nettles, bindies, calthrop, 3 corner jacks, boxthorn). It is important to be able to identify weeds early and treat or remove them before they become a problem. Once a weed has set its seeds it needs to be physically removed rather than sprayed because the seeds will remain to cause issues.

If you are not sure about the local weeds and ones that could cause a problem, ask a local member and record it in the Custodian Folder. It is good to know when the weeds sprout, when to spray them and with what, especially for future Custodian reference.

Trees and shrubs

Most parks will also have screen trees or shrubs planted. Depending on their age, they may still require regular watering to ensure they survive. This is usually via an irrigation system using a timer and drippers. Ensure that you are aware of the irrigation system and how it works. The water needs to be reduced during the cooler months and increased during hot/dry times. Keep the dripper line free of grass and weeds by spraying the line with roundup.



Figure 7 Newly planted trees at Innisfail in 2021



Figure 8 More mature bushes at Railton

Vegetables and flowers

Making your Custodian site feel a little more like home may include planting flowering plants or vegies. If you have ideas on how to make your site more comfortable, please talk to NHQ. You will see that Penola and Railton both have small vegie gardens now. It is up to the Custodians to look after these though.



Figure 9 New vegie garden at Railton (Michele Fielding V78727)

If you have ideas for protecting the Custodian site from harsh summer sun or cold winds (screen trees etc) please let us know.

Maintaining equipment

Most parks have at least one mower (usually a ride-on), whipper snipper, spray gear and maybe pruning equipment. These should all be maintained as you would want them to be when you take over as custodian. If there are issues with equipment, please advise NHQ so that it can be addressed.

If you would like fuel cans to be full and plenty of line in the trimmer when you take over, make sure this is done when you are completing your time as Custodian.

Ride-ons are expensive to purchase and replace, so take care of them. Ensure they are serviced regularly (based on hours of use), check oil levels, filters, check belt tension and make sure the machine is cleaned regularly. If you think there is a problem, please advise NHQ, don't leave it for the next Custodian to find out about and have to get fixed. If you break something, let us know, don't leave it for the next Custodian to have to report when they find something does not work.



Figure 10 Neil Howarth (Q113761) cleaning the ride on at Geeveston

We do not purchase a lot of machinery because this reduces the need for regular engine servicing and potential breakages and replacement. For this reason, we supply brooms rather than blowers to clear concrete areas.

Signage

We have tried to cover all signage that could be needed at the parks, and over time this range of signage has expanded

in response to Custodian requests. If the signage does not match the current park rules, please advise NHQ so that something can be done to rectify this.

If you think other signs are needed, please let us know. If signs are old or worn out, please request new ones from NHQ.

As we all know, people will still ignore signs, but if they are up, the Custodians have something to refer to when an issue arises.

Cleaning

With minimal infrastructure at most of our parks, the only cleaning is around the concrete pads, and cooking areas. It is important that the Custodian site is maintained in a tidy state because this is another 'first impression' for many guests, and the eating area is also another. Whilst guests should clean up after themselves, it is accepted that the barbecue and shelter will need a clean once in a while. If you need equipment and supplies to do this effectively, please let NHQ know so that you can get approval to purchase and be reimbursed. Ensuring that the barbecue and barbecue area are clean at handover is also recommended.

At parks where we have amenities (Boyup Brook and Humpty Doo) we have arrangements for contract cleaners to do most of the cleaning, however, there still may be a need for our Custodians to help between cleans. This is not expected of our Custodians, and it will depend on the capabilities of each Custodian as to how much they are willing to undertake.



Figure 11 Boyup Brook Camp Kitchen, something we would love to have at all our parks!

Happy Hour shelter

Each park has a happy hour area for guests to congregate, socialise, have some food and a drink if they so wish. This area needs to be clean and tidy. We have not installed fixed tables and chairs and it is expected that guests will bring their own chairs to happy hour.

Whilst Custodians are not expected to attend all happy hour events, it is suggested that they at least coordinate regular get-togethers for guests and advise them when to turn up and what to bring. Some Custodians really enjoy this role and will actively arrange happy hours, organise group dinners, movie nights and campfires. Others will be happy not to be involved, but for those we ask that you at least inform guests when they can meet up and ensure that the barbecue is operational.

Ensure there are no risks around the shelter, advise NHQ if you see anything that needs addressing. We supply a fire extinguisher and fire blanket for this area, so ensure these are handy at the shelter.

Note that the fire pits are not to be used under the roofed area.



Figure 12 The happy hour setup at Charleville is always popular

If you are looking to be a custodian at one of our parks, or want to do more of it, please check the **Custodian Calendar** within the RV Parks page of the website.

<https://rvparks.cmca.net.au/Home/CustodiansCalendar>

Please note, popular parks will book out months in advance. We do allow members to be Custodians for several months at a time because this reduces our staff workload in filling vacancies and it allows our members to settle into a town.

Boyup Brook WA: 20th September – 1st October and
30th November – 17th December

Ingham QLD: 25th September – 31st October

Humpty Doo NT: 29th September – 31st October

Geeveston TAS: 30th September – 20th October

Penola SA: 15th October – 10th November

Railton TAS: 31st October – 1st January 2024

FUTURE EDITIONS

Please send in your requests for what you want to see in future editions of this newsletter. It is your resource.