



I am writing to share with you (and your members) our story in the hope that other travellers don't find themselves in our predicament.

My husband and I are permanent nomads and have been travelling around Australia in our caravan for about 5 years. We are members of the Australian Touring RV Club which is affiliated with the NACC.

We were camping at Cosy Corner East Campground in February, near Albany, when the camp host position became vacant. In discussion with the City of Albany staff we agreed to stay on and Camp Host until Easter. In hindsight we were not aware of the potential risks we placed ourselves in, nor the questions we should have asked!

On the long weekend in March we called the Shire Ranger for advice and assistance with dealing with a very large group of unruly campers. We had received several complaints from other campers in the reserve. The Ranger arrived at the campground, accompanied by Albany Police, and the troublesome group were subsequently evicted from the area. The campers were very angry and we, as hosts, received threats and verbal abuse as they departed. The presumption, we think, was that the campers believed that we were responsible for the actions of the Ranger. Not the case!

The campground was subjected to several disruptive and dangerous "drive throughs" and verbal abuse directed at the Camp Host Site over the next 2 nights. On Tuesday morning at 12-20am we were woken by our car alarm and discovered our Landcruiser on fire, which quickly engulfed the vehicle, and set surrounding trees on fire. Police are treating this as an arson attack and we firmly believe that we were targeted and that this was an act of retaliation. The investigation is ongoing and the perpetrators have not been caught!

Our vehicle was written off, we lost over \$20,000 worth of personal possessions in the car, of which our Insurer only covered \$500! Our caravan exterior was extensively damaged by heat during the fire and, 2 months later, repairs are finally underway. We have had to rely on the generosity of Albany locals for transport and accommodation as we wait for our "home" to be repaired. Needless to say all travel plans have ground to a halt!

Whilst the physical and emotional impact of this event has taken its toll on us, the financial losses are our most concerning issue. We approached the City of Albany for some form of financial compensation and provided them with an extensive inventory of possessions lost in the vehicle and approximate values.

To replace our vehicle with a comparable model cost us \$25,000 over and above our insurance payout. We estimate the loss of vehicle contents has cost us in excess of \$20,000. We received notification last week that the City of Albany and their insurance company have rejected our claim for compensation, citing that we do not fall under the City's Public Liability cover. So what umbrella do we sit under in terms of insurance protection for volunteers?

In the course of volunteering our services to the City of Albany it appears that we will leave out of pocket to the tune of about \$50,000. As self-funded travellers that's a significant "hit" and will, of course, impact on our future travel plans.

The fire has seriously impacted on our lives but has also highlighted significant flaws in some Camp Host Programs. Questions need to be asked AND answered!

- Who are you hosting for and do they offer a comprehensive induction process?
- What training is provided?
- In the event of an emergency what processes and practices are in place such as muster points, evacuation procedures, safe exit paths in the event of a fire, contact numbers?
- Are your roles and responsibilities as Camp Host clearly defined?
- What's your level of authority and how are you identified?
- Is there a protocol/procedure manual provided?
- What support is provided to ensure you are in a safe, working environment?
- What about your accountability whilst hosting?

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY

- **What level of insurance cover does the Host Program provide to you in the event of an incident?**

Unfortunately our love of Albany and the South West has been soured by our experience here. We are also very disheartened and disappointed in the City of Albany's reluctance to assist us further, particularly as they appear very keen to encourage travellers into their region. (WAACCI and The National Association of Caravan Clubs has planned the next national rally to be held in Albany in October 2019.)

There are so many nomads who are caravan club/RV club members, and our hope is that clubs continue to flex their collective muscle in support of travellers everywhere. Please support us by sharing our story with your members.

Yours faithfully,

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