

Once a year the Association of Caravan Clubs Victoria (ACCVic) hosts a caravan and RV rally in country Victoria, for 2025 Lakes Entrance was the location for the event with 8 affiliated clubs from around the state attending. We stayed at Eastern Beach Holiday Park and as the name suggests, just a short walk to the beach making it an ideal spot to relax, catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Arriving Friday, everyone set up their caravan or RV and headed to the marquee provided by the local Rotary Club to register and receive a welcome pack. A club representative hung the club flag. The weather was warm and sunny, but it was pleasant in the marquee with the ocean breeze flowing through whilst everyone chatted over drinks and snacks. Eight clubs from various parts of Victoria participated in the rally, Alan Andrews the ACCVic President welcomed everyone attending and provided an update of the weekend activities. Following Alan, the President of Victorian National Rally Committee, Rob Taylor provided an update on the upcoming national rally to be held in Bendigo in 2028.

A BBQ dinner of sausages, burgers and salads was provided by the organisers, ACCVic, and kindly cooked and served by the Gippsland Caravan Club. There was plenty of food to go around and it was cooked to perfection and enjoyed by all.

The time passed quickly but all good things must come to an end, we all headed back to our RVs for a rest.

Saturday, we woke to another sunny day. First item on the agenda was a long table breakfast in the marquee, where everyone came together for breakfast and briefed on the day's activities. The morning was left free for people to explore Lakes Entrance and its wonderful esplanade or attend morning coffee at the Waterwheel Beach Tavern at Lake Tyres Beach. It was the perfect place for a coffee and chat whilst looking out over Lake Tyers and the 90-mile beach. After coffee some went for a walk along the beach before heading back to camp for lunch. There were several activities organised for the afternoon and were well attended, the painting class was very popular, and the budding artists tried their hand at water colour and acrylic paints. Committee member Ken, who is an artist, provided excellent instructions on how to mix colours and techniques of painting with water paints. During this session we painted bookmarks and Christmas cards to take home.

The 'Sit and Stitch' session was run by Janice. Members brought their own knitting, patchwork and other items to work on while chatting and sharing ideas. A very talented group had an enjoyable time, and their craft looked amazing.

The games group run by Jen, enjoyed playing bocce (or pétanque), disk bowls, putt-golf and finska during the afternoon. A fierce competition pursued with dreams won and lost by the avid participants determined to win. After a couple of hours of intense battles on the field, painting or craft it was time to relax over drinks and nibbles and tell stories of what could have been.

An outdoor film screening on *The Green* was scheduled following the regular afternoon Happy Hour and Bring Your Own Everything (BYOE) dinner at the marquee. Unfortunately, it had to be cancelled due to the projectionist's health issues. The marquee for table games and socialising to the rescue.

Sunday morning, we woke to an overcast sky, but this did not deter us going on optional tours that had been planned. Two groups headed off, one to Buchanan Caves and the other a boat trip on the Gippsland Lakes.

The Buchanan Caves was a pleasant 45-minute drive from the caravan park through the picturesque countryside. Arriving at the caves we all gathered and walked up to the Royal Cave entrance where our National Park guide was waiting. After a short introduction we headed into several spectacular caverns of lime formations created almost 400 million years ago from underground rivers. It was amazing to see the stalagmites and stalactites formations, pillars and rim pools. A must see if in the area.

The Gippsland Lake cruise was run by *Peels Cruises*, a family-owned business operating for four generations since 1920, the longest running cruise company on the Gippsland Lakes. Leaving from their jetty we boarded the *Seabird*. Fortunately, it was a calm morning, and the water was flat calm. The sightseeing trip passed *The Entrance*, a man-made channel linking the lake to the ocean, into Reeves Channel before heading to the little town of Metung. On return we detoured up *The Entrance* to see seals relaxing on the rock wall. During the trip the skipper provided commentary of the area and lake features. Interestingly, it took 20 years to cut *The Entrance*, completing it in 1889, and there are approximately 45,000 cormorants in the lakes complex. We were lucky that our major attractions were in the morning as the weather turned wet and cold in the afternoon, resulting in the proposed Mini Golf being a wash out.

Dinner was organised at the Lakes Entrance Golf Club, a short drive from the caravan park. The hotel had a good selection of meals and catered for people with dietary needs. Pre-ordered meals arrived reasonably quickly, and everyone enjoyed their meal and the company before heading back to camp for the evening.

The State Rally concluded with a coffee gathering in the camp kitchen on Monday morning. Alan thanked the committee and members for their attendance and

participation, provided answers to the Welcome Pack Quiz, invited all to next year's event at Myrtleford, and wished everyone safe travels home. Overall, it was another fantastic State Rally enjoyed by all.