



## Motorhome Park update

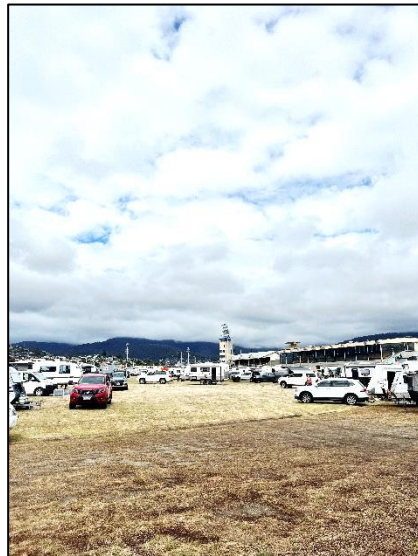
The Showground Motorhome Park is slowly quietening down for the winter months ahead. It's been a very busy 12 months at the park and during the Wooden Boat Festival last month occupancy was running at 100%.

As we reported last month in The RASTUS, the park has experienced a 50% increase in revenue year on year for the last three years.

In the three months to February this year, the Park hosted approximately 3,310 visitors. Over those three months, most park users came from Queensland, closely followed by NSW, then Victoria, Tasmania, WA, SA and the NT.

We also enjoyed hosting International visitors from Germany, Belgium, the USA, UK, the Czech Republic and Argentina. Intrastate, most park users travelled from the North West Coast, followed by Northern Tasmania, and then Southern Tasmania and the West Coast.

The Motorhome Park is now an integral part of Hobart's tourism offering. People who arrive with a campervan or caravan stay much longer than fly-in visitors, and spend more money, spread across the region, during their extended stay. Anecdotally, this year we noticed a growing number of Park users arriving with a car being towed behind their campervan to give them greater mobility while visiting southern Tasmania.



## Leading Stories

- **Motorhome Park update**
- **The Passing of Paul Geard**
- **Bill Geeves: vale to an irrepressible character.**
- **Redevelopment Update**
- **Community Battery**
- **The Rising Costs of Inflation**
- **RAST Support for 2023 Regatta**
- **Reintroduction of Vineyard of the Year**



## The Passing of Paul Geard

A former president of the Society and well known personality in the agricultural and racing sectors, Paul Geard, has sadly died.

Paul began showing at the Royal Hobart Show with his parents in 1954 and was closely associated with our Society for the remainder of his life. His son, Ben, continues the tradition today as a director of the RAST.

Paul first exhibited Tamworth Pigs and Jersey Cows with his parents in 1954 and first exhibited Holstein Friesian cattle in 1956 and won Champion Dairy Cow in this, his first year. Later he became Chair of the Dairy Cattle Committee and remained so until his passing.

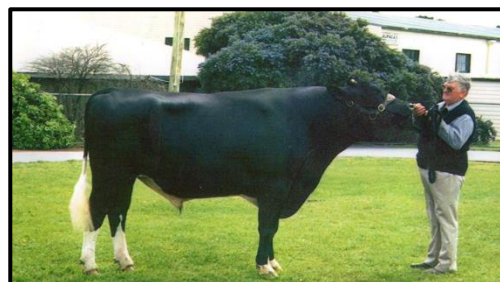
Paul joined the Show Council in the 1980's and was elected President of the Society in 2005, a position he held for six years. He joined the RAST Board on its inception in 2010. He was an Honorary Life Member and Honorary Life Councillor.

His passionate advocacy for the Show saw Paul, together with his wife Elizabeth, receive the Society's ultimate accolade, the Living Legend of the Show, in 2019.

Paul supported the RAST in many other ways including through direct sponsorship, providing resources and machinery, supplying hay, undertaking voluntary work on the arena and donating a tractor to the woodchop section each year.

Most weekends would find Paul at the Showground, volunteering his time to develop and improve the ground, building judging rings, redeveloping the central arena, and general ground maintenance.

RAST is a better Society for his presence among us over those many decades. Our condolences to Paul's entire family on behalf of everyone at RAST.





## **Bill Geeves: vale to an irrepressible character.**

Royal Hobart Wine Show legend Bill Geeves passed away this month, bringing to an end a 50-year association with the Wine Show.

Larger than life itself, Bill mentored countless new staff, stewards and officials of the wine show. In the early 1970's he was a young employee of Cascade Brewery when the head of Cascade asked if he would like to join a committee being set up to consider conducting a wine show. He remained involved for the next 50 years.

Bill was an irrepressible character. At his funeral RAST CEO Scott Gadd drew laughs when he related: "Bill would often just appear in my office unannounced and greet me with the words 'Morning Dickhead'.



"He would come sometimes as a messenger, sometimes to kick around ideas and strategy but always to stir me up a little. He was well respected and liked by everyone at RAST, especially those involved in the Royal Hobart Wine Show, past and present."

Young, and old, Bill's commitment and passion for the Wine Show and the wider RAST was second to none. This was recognised formally by the Society through the presentation of the Tasmanian Award in 2016 in gratitude for his loyal support and hard work over the previous 40 plus years up to that point. This is the highest honour RAST can bestow at the annual wine awards.

Earlier, in 2013, Bill was presented with an Honorary Life Membership at Government House by His Excellency the late Peter Underwood AC. A large contingent involved in RAST and the Wine Show attended Bill's funeral including two former Wine Show Committee Chairs, James Godfrey, who travelled from Adelaide for the sad occasion, and John Ellis, who travelled from Melbourne.

Vale Bill, you will certainly be sadly missed by everyone who knew you.



## Redevelopment Update

Power has now been switched off to almost all the Showground buildings and demolition will begin soon, ahead of the Showground's redevelopment.

The last of our 12 or so tenants have left the Showground, and the administration staff will soon be moving to two cabins on the lawns just inside the Showground main gates, which will be the temporary administration office during the redevelopment of the Showground.

Reusable materials have also been salvaged from the Cattle Shed and other buildings in preparation. If you have interest in salvaging any of the materials from the buildings throughout the Showground, please contact RAST Operations Manager, Mitch Spong on 6272 6812 as soon as possible.

## Community Battery

Community batteries are much in the news in Sydney and Melbourne as a future means of supplying renewable and sustainable power to local communities. As readers would know, it is something the RAST has been exploring for nearly a year as a means to powering the redeveloped Showground.

The need for self-sufficiency in power was highlighted late last year when the Showground's power contract ended and the new contract saw a 105% cost increase. Since the Society publicly highlighted the situation, many Tasmanian businesses have come forward to complain along similar lines.

The model we are investigating through a Board sub-committee would harvest solar power from the Showground, store it in batteries on-site, and use it to power the precinct. Excess power would be sold into the grid.

Since our investigations became public knowledge, we have received a great deal of unsolicited interest from developers, the renewable energy sector, and banking institutions.

Ultimately, modelling of the scheme predicts the Showground would become a producer of power, rather than a customer of the power companies. While detailed investigation continues, our intention would be to use funds generated from the sale of power to fund the staging of the Royal Hobart Show, and this would mean increased funding for the Show compared to the past when the Show was funded out of a fairly restricted general revenue budget.



## The Rising Costs of Inflation

RAST is in discussion with the State Government about various issues pertaining to the Showground redevelopment.

The Society wrote to the Government in December 2022, pointing out the inflationary impact of rising costs. A number of projects in Tasmania have been deferred because of inflation and increasing interest rates, and even the state government's own projects have required greater funding than anticipated in the current economic climate. The Mystate Bank Arena redevelopment experienced an increase of \$20m to \$66m, or nearly 43.5%.

In our talks with the Premier and other ministers, we are discussing inflation and interest rates, which have both increased dramatically since the State Government announced its support for the redevelopment in March 2021. Inflation back then was 1.1%. Now it is 7.8%.

We're also discussing other issues of a more technical nature, such as the proposed community battery the Society is intending to finance to provide eco-friendly power to the Showground and sell excess power into the grid.

## RAST Support for 2023 Regatta

They helped us when we held the Show at the Regatta Grounds for the first time last October, so we returned the favour when the Royal Hobart Regatta was held last month.

The Society provided technical assistance to the Regatta on a range of issues including infrastructure needs and provision of alcohol on site; supplied labour, two groundsmen to assist with set-up and a cleaning crew.

Both organisations are core parts of Tasmania's social make-up. The Royal Hobart Show is over 200 years old and this year, the Royal Hobart Regatta celebrated its 185th event.

There are many areas where our interests coincide, and we share our views regularly, based upon experience gained over our long and proud histories as event organisers.



## Reintroduction of Vineyard of the Year

The Society is planning on re-establishing the Vineyard of the Year program later this year.

It was very successful as an industry event and the associated field day at the winning vineyard was always well attended, usually with more than 100 people coming along.

However, the program was held early each year, and because of the summer holiday season, this made it difficult to attract large numbers of entries. Then came Covid and the rest is history.

But the Society has remained committed to the program which was developed to promote and recognise excellence in vineyard management as a foundation for making great wines.

Moving forward, the model we have adopted is to combine it as part of the Royal Hobart Wine Show. Effectively it will be another wine show trophy, followed by a field day for the winning vineyard. We shall pilot it this year and then review.



Photos from the 2018 and 2019 Vineyard of the Year Awards.