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MEDIA RELEASE

Fuel prices reshape Grey Nomad travel plans as winter migration begins

- Rising fuel prices and cost-of-living pressures are changing how many caravan owners travel, with more opting for shorter trips and closer-to-home destinations.
- Demand for caravanning remains strong, with Australians taking 17.3 million caravan and camping trips and spending \$12.6 billion nationally last year.
- CIL says many owners don't realise their caravan is still at risk when it's parked at home between trips.

As thousands of Australians prepare for the annual winter grey nomad migration, leading caravan and RV insurer CIL says rising fuel prices and ongoing cost-of-living pressures are changing the way many caravan owners travel.

New industry data shows demand for caravanning and camping remains strong, with Australians taking 17.3 million caravan and camping trips and spending \$12.6 billion nationally last year*. However this year, according to CIL, many travellers are increasingly opting for shorter trips, staying closer to home and looking for ways to better manage travel costs.

CIL Manager Michael Porter said rising fuel prices were emerging as a key consideration for caravan owners heading into the peak winter travel season.

"Australians still love the freedom and flexibility that caravanning offers, but many people are becoming more conscious of travel costs and adjusting their plans accordingly," Mr Porter said.

"We're hearing from customers who are shortening itineraries, travelling shorter distances or choosing destinations closer to home to help manage fuel expenses."

Each year, thousands of grey nomads leave the cooler southern states and travel north in search of warmer weather, supporting regional communities and tourism operators across Australia.

Mr Porter said that while travel habits may be changing, the appeal of the caravanning lifestyle remained strong. "Caravanning continues to be one of the most flexible and affordable ways for Australians to take a holiday," he said.

"It gives people the ability to control many of their costs, whether that's how far they travel, where they stay or how long they're away."

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia's 2026 State of Industry Report found average trip lengths are becoming shorter as travellers adapt to economic conditions, with consumers increasingly prioritising value and closer-to-home getaways.

The report also identified elevated fuel prices as an emerging challenge for the industry, with higher travel costs expected to further influence travel decisions throughout the year.



Despite these pressures, caravan ownership continues to grow, with Australia now home to almost 938,000 registered recreational vehicles — an increase of four per cent on the previous year*.

Mr Porter said the figures highlighted the importance of ensuring caravans remained protected, whether owners were travelling regularly or spending more time parked at home.

“One misconception we often see is that if a caravan isn’t being used, it doesn’t need insurance,” he said.

“In reality, caravans can still be exposed to risks such as storms, hail, theft, fire and accidental damage when they’re parked at home, in storage or at a holiday park.”

“Whether you’re planning a big lap around Australia or simply taking a few shorter trips this year, it’s important to make sure your caravan is appropriately insured.”

As travel habits shift, the broader outlook for caravanning remains strong. A growing number of Aussies continue to embrace the lifestyle, even as they rethink how and where they hit the road.

While trip lengths and distances may be changing, caravanning continues to offer a compelling way to explore Australia — balancing cost considerations with the freedom to travel on your own terms.

ENDS

* Caravan and Camping State of Industry 2026 Report, Caravan Industry Association of Australia

Q&A for caravanners changing their travel plans this winter

Q1: If I’m not planning to use my caravan for the next 6 months, what should I do?

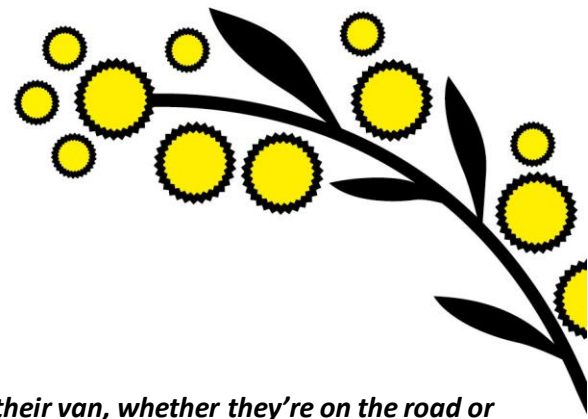
Rather than cancelling your insurance, consider Lay-Up Period Cover — an optional feature offered by some insurers, including CIL. It allows owners to reduce their premium while the van is safely stored and not in use, while still maintaining protection. To be eligible, your caravan must be parked at home or at a secure storage location.

Q2: If caravan owners are taking shorter, more frequent trips, does that change how they should set up their van?

Yes. A regularly used caravan tends to carry more gear — clothing, cooking equipment, electronics, outdoor furniture — and that adds weight and value over time. It’s worth making sure the van stays within its legal weight limits and that your power system can handle the appliances you’re running day to day.

Q3. What’s one thing caravan owners often overlook when it comes to insurance?

Contents. It’s easy to underestimate how much value sits inside a caravan set up for regular use. A simple record — photos of cupboards and lockers, receipts for higher-value items and serial numbers for electronics — can make a real difference if you ever need to make a claim. It’s also worth checking your insurance reflects any major upgrades like lithium batteries, solar panels or inverters.



Q4. Are there any simple steps caravan owners can take to better protect their van, whether they're on the road or parked at home?

A few basics go a long way. Hitch locks, wheel locks, secure storage compartments and not leaving valuables visible through windows are all simple but effective. If the van is parked at home or in storage between trips, it's still exposed to risks like storms, hail, theft and accidental damage. It's also worth packing down awnings in poor weather and storing portable gear safely when you leave camp.

Notes to Editor

A copy of the Caravan and Camping State of Industry 2026 Report, Caravan Industry Association of Australia is available upon request.

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