Festival's future in doubt

By **Chanelle Leslie**

ONE of South Australia's few camping music festivals is at risk of being shut down because of noise complaints lodged over the past two consecutive years.

Reconnect Festival is a non-profit electronic music event held on private land near Bowhill, which drew about 200 visitors to the area in 2010 and 2011.

Now Karoonda East Murray council has given the property owner a warning after local residents haved voiced their concerns in a petition.

Neighbour Jason Rampling said his family had to travel to Adelaide to get a decent night's sleep during the three-day festival.

"Ever since they've been running it it's been a disaster because they have no consideration for anybody but themselves," he said.

"We had cars coming down the driveway at night.

"We had no notification (of the event)."

In a letter to council, Mr Rampling wrotethat the event was about money grabbing, but co-organiser Hayley Wilson refuted the claim.

"They really do have the wrong impression of us and what we're about," Ms Wilson said.

"We're entirely non-profit and run by volunteers.

"Our mantra and our protocol is about respect."

Ms Wilson said she was surprised the petition had come four months after the event, and that the neighbours had not contacted her directly.

"The council, local police and neighbours had my phone number," she said.

"It was agreed that if any neighbour was being adversely affected at any time we would be contacted via my mobile so we could respond to their complaint immediately; however, we did not receive any phone calls during the event.

"We invited the council and all neighbours on surrounding properties to assist in setting sound levels during the sound check so they could feel comfortable about what was happening.

"We also contacted council two months after the event to find out if there had been any complaints but there hadn't been any."

Chris Bylhouwer, who is owner of the property where the event is held, said some people would always complain.

"It's just the minority complaining versus the benefit of the town and area," he said.

He said the people who attended the event were fairly mellow and that the volume was not excessive.

"One year a policeman came out and even he was surprised the music was not that loud," Mr Bylhouwer said.

Mid Murray council chief executive officer Peter Smithson said the council would not make a decision on this year's event until organisers had submitted an application.

"What we will be doing is taking into account the objections that we received firmly," Mr Smithson said.

"(Approval) was conditional and we said to them that it was a once-off."

Some doubt: Co-organiser Hayley Wilson holds a poster promoting last year's Reconnect Festival, held near Bowhill, which has caused neighbours to petition council.

IN BRIEF

Caravan park upgrade scrapped

Plans to purchase a second cabin for the Karoonda caravan park have been scrapped in an attempt to cut $600,000 from expenses in the council's upcoming budget. Plans for a $12,000 laundry facility for the park have also been dropped. Council chief executive officer Peter Smithson said upgrades to the park would be considered in future budgets. He said at an expense of $59,000, a new cabin would be likely to increase traffic to the park. "It's a bit of a Catch-22," he said. "It's probably averaging one night a week but if we had a more modern cabin it might attract more people to the park."

Coorong councillors reject draft budget

By **Peri Strathearn**

COORONG councillors have sounded a warning about the council's 2012-13 budget by refusing to release it to the public without further adjustments.

According to the council's usual timetable, the draft budget would go out to public consultation during the next month, then be finalised after a community meeting on May 29 and formally adopted on June 19.

But Cr Jeff Arthur objected to the draft budget at the council's meeting last Tuesday.

"It is irresponsible to increase borrowings to $3.8 million," he said.

"If this goes out as it is, you're going to get negativity-plus from the ratepayers."

The council borrowed about $700,000 in 2011-12 after a budget that had forecast much greater borrowings of $2.6 million.

Cr Andrew Dawes expressed his agreement with Cr Arthur, and Cr Jeff Klitscher and Cr Sharon Bland joined them in voting down the draft budget.

The move forced council staff to scramble to organise an urgent workshop, scheduled for today, at which the budget will be further revised.

Corporate support manager Paul Duka had first presented the draft budget documents to the council's audit committee on April 11, and all councillors discussed them in private immediately before the council meeting last week.

Although the budget's first draft was not made public, it is believed to have contained a six per cent rate rise as well as the increased borrowings.

Mr Duka said he would be more than happy to comment on the content of the council's annual business plan once it was endorsed for public consultation, as all the figures it contained were subject to change until then.

Councillors will have at least two opportunities to reconsider the rate level and other aspects of the annual business plan at today's workshop, and again when they vote on its adoption in June.

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