

Deni “still open”

By ZOE MCMAUGH

Edward River Council will invest more to promote Deniliquin and district this summer in an effort to counteract the impact of the drought.

Mayor Norm Brennan said additional money will be allocated to the council's Visit Deni campaign, funded through the Promotions Fund, which is this year fully-funded by council.

Council will also implement a Christmas Activation Plan, which aims to enhance the festive spirit within the community and entice more people to visit and spend locally.

The activation plan will see the return of the combined Edward River Christmas Party and Carols By Candlelight, to be held in the Deniliquin Waring Gardens on December 16, alongside improved Christmas decorations across the community.

Cr Brennan said the idea was to let people know that the Edward River region was “still open for business”.

“From the feedback being received by tourism operators, there is a perception out there, because of the drought, that the river is not flowing as freely as it is,” Cr Brennan said.

“In fact, its levels at the moment are among the best we have seen.

“We are still open for business and there is a fear that if this kind of thinking continues the real impact will be in January, February and March next year.”

Edward River Council will invest another \$25,000 in the marketing campaign, and \$10,000 on Christmas decorations as part of the program.

In a report, Council tourism and economic development manager Michelle Cobb said the additional marketing funding would be used to bring television and print media to Deniliquin and district, with the hope that resulting articles or programs would contribute to a boost in visitor numbers, “to alleviate the effects of the current drought”.

“Due to increasing drought conditions, coupled with ongoing media coverage of the drought, council has suggested that extra funds be made available for an intense media campaign,” Ms Cobb said in the report to council.

“The media campaign is recommended to run before Christmas and just afterwards, to ensure potential visitors are aware the Edward River is flowing, and the town is open for business.

“In addition, and following the outstanding success of the media tour conducted in phase two of the Visit Deni campaign, it is recommended that new media tour be pitched as an entirely new destination, with new product and experiences — much more than the river.

“Representatives from the *Sun Herald*, *Newscorp*, *Weekly Times*, *Royal Auto*, *Little Melbourne*, *AAP*, family bloggers and freelance travel writers will be invited, along with journalists who visited the region in early 2017.”

Ms Cobb said the Christmas Activation Plan had been developed in conjunction

with Deniliquin Business Chamber and Deniliquin Rotary, with the key feature being the combined celebration on December 16.

The day will also include the final two draws of the PASTORAL TIMES \$4600 Spend & Win shop local promotion — a \$1000 and \$2000 Deni Gift Card respectively.

The plan also includes the Deni Lights Up at Christmas Competition with prizes for the best house, street, business and farm gate.

To complement the competition, the Waring Gardens will be lit up with Christmas decorations.

Council will revitalise the old town Christmas trees and paint two existing wagons in a Christmas theme, with additional decorations donated to the council from the City of Stonnington. It includes tree guards, bin wraps, decals for shop windows, flags and banners to brighten the streets.

Council will also invest in large rusted steel letters spelling ‘DENI’ which are expected to be 1.5m high each.

“Steel mesh inside the letters will allow them to be used year-round and lit up in appropriate colours depending on the time of year,” Ms Cobb said.

“People will be encouraged to hang Christmas decorations on them at Christmas, eggs at Easter, and cattle tags during the Ute Muster.

“It is envisaged that the letters will provide a photo opportunity for visitors and residents alike.”