

COUNCIL REPORT

1st Ordinary Council Meeting

AGENDA ITEM:	13.2.1
REPORT TITLE:	Christmas in Palmerston 2024
MEETING DATE:	Tuesday 5 November 2024
AUTHOR:	Events Officer, Helen Tucker
APPROVER:	Acting General Manager People and Place, Emma Blight

COMMUNITY PLAN

Family and Community: Palmerston is a safe and family friendly community where everyone belongs.

PURPOSE

This Report seeks to update Council on plans for celebrating Christmas in Palmerston 2024.

KEY MESSAGES

- City of Palmerston provides a range of activities for the community to celebrate Christmas and the festive season.
- City of Palmerston's popular Christmas Wonderland returns to Goyder Square from Sunday 15 December until Monday 23 December from 5:30pm – 9:30pm daily.
- Sunday 15 December will be a Christmas Wonderland 'low-sensory' evening from 4:30pm - 8:00pm.
- The Trussmas Tree will be installed in Goyder Square and will be lit on the opening night of Christmas Wonderland.
- New interactive elements this year include a variety of roaming entertainment, face painting and the children's Christmas crafts being re-located to the library.
- Several new attractions will be incorporated into Christmas Wonderland, including:
 - **Arctic Blast:** A large walkthrough igloo measuring eight (8) metres in diameter and four (4) metres high.
 - **Illuminated Feature Fans:** Large fans with integrated LED lights that create a mesmerising lighting effect and significant wind, situated inside the new igloo.
 - **Mini Carousel:** A three (3) horse carousel with lights and music, designed for younger guests, situated inside a floored white pavilion on the lawn area.
 - **Starburst Street:** A line of starburst lights, featuring a three (3) dimensional star-shaped design reaching almost three (3) metres in height, with an array of lights at varying lengths, providing a spectacular festive display along the train route parallel to Candy Cane Lane.
- During the day, the Library will be running a Christmas program which includes a different activity each day of the week.
- On review of the Carpentaria Accessibility and Inclusion Report, City of Palmerston will introduce new elements to ensure Christmas Wonderland enhances its accessibility for 2024.
- This year, City of Palmerston was unable to secure the Tactile Arts Christmas Markets, as the stallholders expressed concerns about insufficient trade relative to their investment in creating and selling their products, making it unsustainable for them.

- A comprehensive marketing campaign will be conducted, incorporating a variety of messaging including Christmas Wonderland, School Holiday Program, Sustainability, Christmas Lights, shop local and more. The campaign will use a variety of tactics including posters, radio ads, social media and other outdoor advertising placements

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Report entitled Christmas in Palmerston 2024 be received and noted.

BACKGROUND

Each year City of Palmerston offers a range of activities and programs to the community to help celebrate Christmas. Christmas Wonderland is the highlight event, which in 2023, brought over 16,000 people to Goyder Square.

Christmas Wonderland 2023 saw the addition of a weather shield to fully cover Goyder Square, allowing the event to continue regardless of heavy rainfall, which had been a concern from previous years.

Palmerston Recreation Centre was transformed into a first of its kind in Palmerston Christmas Market. The Christmas Market was made possible through a collaboration with Tactile Arts, a member-based not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting contemporary arts and crafts in the Northern Territory's top end since 1973.

Christmas Wonderland 2023 saw the introduction of Santas Grotto, a transformation of the Library Community Room into an intimate, fully themed experience for families to interact with Santa. 2023 also largely became a craft wonderland, with the kid's art workshop gaining immense popularity.

Christmas Wonderland 2023 was open from 15 - 23 December and welcomed on average 2,000 people per night. The event featured all the favourites of the previous year including the Christmas train, snow machine and Santa's house.



Christmas Wonderland Train Rides



Christmas Wonderland Tactile Arts Market



A family enjoying the Christmas theming



Children's Christmas Craft

DISCUSSION

Christmas Wonderland

Christmas Wonderland 2024 will begin with a low sensory, invitation only event on Sunday 15 December, before opening to the public on Monday 16 December.

Christmas Wonderland is free to attend and will return in 2024, showcasing many beloved features such as the Christmas Train, Twinkle Tunnel, and Snow Machines. This year, we're excited to introduce several new interactive experiences, including roving performers to entertain guests in line, face painting and crafts in a beautifully decorated library space, and a range of Christmas performances on the main Goyder Square stage. Each evening will also feature food stalls and several exciting new attractions, ensuring a fresh and memorable experience for the community.

The new additions to Christmas Wonderland will include:

- **Arctic Blast:** A large walkthrough igloo measuring eight (8) metres in diameter and four (4) metres high.
- **Illuminated Feature Fans:** Large fans with integrated LED lights that create a mesmerising lighting effect and significant wind, situated inside the new igloo.
- **Mini Carousel:** A three (3) horse carousel with lights and music, designed for younger guests, situated inside a floored white pavilion on the lawn area.
- **Starburst Street:** A line of starburst lights, featuring a three (3) dimensional star-shaped design reaching almost three (3) metres in height, with an array of lights at varying lengths, providing a spectacular festive display along the train route parallel to Candy Cane Lane.

Christmas Wonderland - Low Sensory

Once again Council will host a low sensory event, exclusively for community members with diverse abilities and their friends, families, and caregivers, including community organisations, NDIS agencies and local schools.

This event demonstrates Council's commitment to inclusion and aligns with the Disability Inclusion and Access Plan (DIAP) and the Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework (IDA).

In 2023, Carpentaria Disability Services conducted a review of the accessibility features and strategies for Christmas Wonderland, producing an Accessibility and Inclusion Report with recommendations aimed at enhancing accessibility in the future. Based on the findings of this review, City of Palmerston will implement improvements to ensure the event is fully accessible. These recommendations include clearer signage and wayfinding, as well as a review of access points to specific displays.

The low sensory evening will be held on Sunday 15 December, from 4:30pm – 8:30pm, with the Christmas Wonderland displays offering the same elements in a low-sensory delivery i.e., reducing flashing lights, lowering music and sounds with no large crowds.

Children's Christmas Craft

Children's Christmas Craft was very popular with attendees in 2023. Building on this positive feedback, staff have created a dedicated Christmas craft area in the Library this year. Each evening, children will have the opportunity participate in festive activities, including stocking and bauble decoration. Additionally, a face painter will be on hand every night to add to the fun and keep everyone engaged.

Trussmass Tree

City of Palmerston will again present the Trussmass Tree, one of the tallest in the Northern Territory at over 13 meters high, covered in hundreds of twinkling fairy lights, baubles, shimmering tinsel and topped with a spectacular star. The official lighting of the tree will take place on Monday 16 December at 7:30pm. Visitors will be encouraged to join in the countdown of the official lighting of the tree, and performers will be present to bring Christmas cheer with music and entertainment.

Christmas Markets

City of Palmerston staff met with Tactile Arts to invite them again to hold the Christmas Markets at the Recreation Centre as part of Christmas Wonderland. The committee met with their members (the stallholders) and unfortunately, after numerous discussions, City of Palmerston was unable to secure the Christmas Markets this year, with stallholders expressing concerns about insufficient trade, relative to their investment and time in creating and selling their products last year, which made participation unsustainable for them.

City of Palmerston Library Christmas Program

The library will be running a daytime Christmas craft program from Monday 15 December until Friday 20 December. The Christmas crafts will include the making of Christmas tree decorations, Christmas sand art, Christmas photo frames, with two (2) festive movies being shown.

Performances

Each night of Christmas Wonderland will see different performances take to the main Goyder Square stage. This year's entertainment options have been expanded to include school groups, wind ensembles, local solo acts, and group choirs, ensuring that no two (2) nights will be the same.

Roaming performers will be a further addition to Christmas Wonderland 2024, allowing the entire of Goyder Square to be activated continuously by entertainment.

CONSULTATION AND MARKETING

Festive Season Marketing

An inclusive and comprehensive marketing campaign will be repeated in 2024 given the positive results from last year. The Christmas campaign will deliver important messaging across several themes including:

- Christmas lights (TBA in conjunction with radio)
- Keeping pets and animals safe over Christmas (register and microchip)
- Shop local in Palmerston
- Safety and security throughout Christmas
- Sustainable Christmas (details TBA)
- School holiday program at the Library

- Office closures
- Christmas Wonderland events

By combining messaging into one marketing campaign, it allows for a larger voice to reach more people on a variety of platforms with messaging that resonates with them.

Placements will include;

- Radio ads and live reads
- Cross promotion on social media with Mix 104.9
- Print ads in the NT News
- A large outdoor banner mesh around the perimeter of Goyder Square
- Poster displays at all Council customer experience touch points (Civic Centre, Library, Recreation Centre) and via businesses and shopping centres
- VMS boards
- Social media organic posts – using images and video footage from last year
- Online events hosted by Off the Leash
- Local social media influencer/s
- Paid social media carousel (Facebook and Instagram)
- Eventbrite listing
- Website homepage
- Staff email signature banners

The Christmas campaign will also look to ensure local media outlets are aware of all the activities and messaging. This will be done through media releases, radio interviews and inviting media to events.

The campaign will be targeting a larger audience to encourage a broader range of people to visit Palmerston and see everything that is on offer in the municipality.

The following City of Palmerston staff were consulted in preparing this Report:

- Marketing and Communications Manager
- City Activation Officer

In preparing this report, the following external parties were consulted:

- General Manager, Total Event Services

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications for this Report.

BUDGET AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The complete cost of Christmas Wonderland will be covered by the Council's endorsed operational budget, which has been designated an amount of \$235,000. The budget designated for Christmas promotions will remain at \$9,000, staying consistent with the previous year.

Procurement was undertaken in 2023 to bring Christmas Wonderland to Palmerston for three (3) years, 2024 being the second of the three (3). The tender was awarded to a local business and is set to bring unique and innovative elements to the community to each Christmas until 2025 (inclusive).

RISK, LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Providing a range of interactive, family-friendly activities including a large-scale Christmas event ensures that the community's expectations for the festive celebrations are met.

Adhering to all safety plans and cyclone protocols will ensure that the health and safety of our community are a priority.

The contractor that has been engaged to deliver Palmerton Christmas Wonderland will ensure all safety measures, including in relation to the Christmas Train are met, and a comprehensive risk assessment and plan are provided.

This Report addresses the following City of Palmerston Strategic Risks:

1. **Community Safety**
Failure of Council to effectively plan and deliver its role in community safety.
4. **Inclusion, Diversity and Access**
Failure to balance meeting needs of Palmerston's cultural mosaic
5. **Infrastructure**
Failure to plan, deliver and maintain fit for purpose infrastructure.

STRATEGIES, FRAMEWORK AND PLANS IMPLICATIONS

This Report relates to the following City of Palmerston Strategies, Framework and Plans:

Community Plan

- **Connected Community:** Strengthen social ties and foster a sense of belonging through inclusive and festive community events.
- **Vibrant Community:** Enhance the vibrancy of Palmerston by providing high-quality entertainment and cultural experiences.
- **Safe and Inclusive Community:** Ensure all community members can participate and enjoy the event in a safe and welcoming environment.

Palmerston Municipal Plan 2024-25:

- **Community Wellbeing:** Support community wellbeing through events that promote joy, inclusivity, and holiday spirit.
- **Economic Growth:** Stimulate economic growth by attracting visitors and encouraging holiday spending in the local area.
- [Inclusive, Diverse & Accessible Policy Framework](#)
- [Disability Inclusion and Access Plan 2022-2025](#)

COUNCIL OFFICER CONFLICT OF INTEREST DECLARATION

We the author and approving officer declare that we do not have a conflict of interest in relation to this matter.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil