

The **Guardian** T

Times

Gift cards another choice

THREE years of COVID and floods. Kerang traders are still feeling the pinch, but resilience has been on display.

Member of Kerang Traders Bec Hewitt urged people to look locally first for Christmas gifts and produce.

"Many are still feeling the financial impacts of closures during the pandemic and then again last year with the floods.

"It happened in October, but the impacts were long-lasting with the town cut

Christmas celebrations kicked off a month earlier this year, the inaugural Kerang Traders Christmas promotion launch festival providing joy for the whole

Residents gathered on Victoria Street from 5pm on November 17, to make the most of extended shopping hours and market stalls as Christmas draws closer.

Local children were treated to free face painting from Jenelle's Face & Body Art, as well as a free screening of The Grinch on the big screen.

Ms Hewitt said she had been pleased with the evening's first attempt.

"With this being the first event we've held like this, we felt it had been successful and well supported," she said.

"All of the kids had a ball."

Ms Hewitt said the promotion launch had aimed to support local businesses across the Gannawarra Shire.

"We definitely encourage supporting local as much as possible," she said.

"For a lot of local businesses this is their busiest time of the year.

"Local businesses support a lot of local community events and sporting clubs, so it's so important for us to support them as

"We also had some market stalls, with local stallholders able to show off their wares to shoppers."

Ms Hewitt said the launch festival and the new Kerang Trader's gift cards were ways to lessen the stress of Christmas shopping.

"We also have Kerang Trader's gift cards this year," she said.

"In the event that you're challenged with your gift giving this year, there's always the gift cards.

"They can be purchased at select stores or online via the Kerang Traders website.'

For more information about Kerang Traders or to purchase a gift card, please visit kerangtraders.com.au.



Miles Meaden gets his face painted as Spider-Man by Jenelle Burton at Kerang Traders' Christmas







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Shopping local gift of giving

MEAGAN McGREGOR

SHOPPING locally will be key to Swan Hill retailers this year as interest rate rises and inflation take a toll on tightened purse

Swan Hill Inc marketing coordinator Remi Maher said shopping locally where possible is the best thing you can do to ensure the whole community can enjoy Christmas.

"Shopping locally is quite literally the gift that keeps on giving," she said.

"When we support our local business. the money quite literally stays in our community, meaning local employees and business owners benefit.

"We have had a pretty tough few years, with COVID and now interest rate rises, everyone is feeling the pinch.

"We just ask that you consider looking local first, because quite often people are surprised at local pricing and some retailers are prepared to price match."

Other benefits of buying local include no shipping fees or shipping damage as well as face-to-face customer service to ensure you're know as much as possible about the item you are buying.

"There is nothing quite like holding the item in your hands, feeling the quality and checking the colour," Ms Maher said.

"Often when buying online, we can get misled by an item's size or true colouring.

"Popping into a local retailer can mean that you find out an alternative item that is better value for money or a newer version.

"There is nothing more disappointing

Reasons to buy local:

- 1. It's convenient
- 2. No travel costs
- 3. Better for the environment by reducing your carbon footprint
- 4. Investing back into your own community
- 5. Creates demand for local jobs
- 6. No postage costs or risk of damage
- 7. Perishables can be stored faster reducing waste
- 8. There are plenty of opportunities to find a unique gift idea
- 9. You help support local business
- 10. Local business invests back into community clubs and events

that having your item arrive damaged or late in the post.

"We understand that some items just cannot be purchased locally, but where possible, just take a look before jumping online as you will avoid some of the pitfalls of buying from the internet."

This year, shoppers will again have the chance to win gift cards with all purchases made through participating retailers.

Winners will be drawn on December 27 with a \$1500 gift card going to first place, \$500 to second and 10 people will win \$100 gift cards.

Entries remain open until Christmas Eve.



Swan Hill Inc marketing coordinator Remi Maher urges people to shop locally this Christmas.

Picture: Noel Fisher

























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Giving is its own gift

MEAGAN McGREGOR

THE team at Ray White Swan Hill is getting into the Christmas spirit again with their annual Little Ray of Giving campaign.

As part of the broader Ray White real estate family, principals Fiona Hawley and Cameron Smits are proud to see all gifts donated locally remain in the community.

"Over the years, we have received in excess of 800 gifts that are then distributed throughout our community by Mallee Family Care," Mr Smits said.

"The gifts go to the people who might need a little extra Christmas cheer due to financial difficulty or not having family to receive from.

"The gifts are a small token to remind everyone that Christmas is a time to connect and celebrate."

Gifts can be donated by calling into the Ray White office at 199 Campbell Street, Swan Hill.

"It's always very uplifting to take part in the Little Ray of Giving Campaign because we see just how generous our community is," Ms Hawley said.

"We are always amazed at how many donations we receive, and no gift is too small, anything helps."

Gifts should not be wrapped before delivering to the office as Mallee Family Care staff will allocate items based upon suitability.

Gifts should be new and unopened and will be accepted until the middle of December.

With the rise in interest rates and costs of



Ray White Swan Hill's Fiona Hawley says it's "uplifting" to see the community's generosity every Christmas.

Picture: Noel Fisher

living, many families face difficulties this year and Mr Smits said the gift of giving was mutually rewarding.

"It's great to think that one of our gifts might make a child's Christmas," he said.

"For families finding things a bit tight this year, a gift that makes a child smile could make all the difference."

Mallee Family Care chief executive Teresa

Jayet thanked Ray White for their support in collecting donations.

"We are extremely grateful for the support of Ray White and the wider community in coming together for such an important cause," she said.

"Our shared goal is to ensure that every child in the Southern Mallee region experiences the joy and magic of Christmas."

Top priority for letters to Santa

RAY White Swan Hill will ensure all letters to Santa arrive safely this year by offering an express post service directly from their Campbell Street office.

With many cyber threats and recent electronic communication failures, the real estate's principals and owners Fiona Hawley and Cameron Smits aren't taking any chances.

"We know how important it is that all letters arrive safely at Santa's workshop," Mr Smits said.

"That's why we are making sure all our letters are going the old-fashioned way this year – by post."

While some may believe snail mail to be outdated, Ms Hawley said the system had worked perfectly for a very long time and writing a handwritten letter allowed children to include additional messages to Santa such as pictures.

"It is obviously a very busy time for Santa and the elves at this time of year, but we have put arrangements in place to ensure all letters posted from our office will be received by Santa and a reply will be sent," Ms Hawley said.

"Letters could include Christmas wish lists, reasons a child believes they have been good, drawings or artwork or even just a quick note to let Santa know you're thinking of him at Christmas."

Letters can be placed in the red mailing box inside the office at 199 Campbell Street, Swan Hill, and should be posted no later than December 13 to ensure the team at the North Pole have time to reply.







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What do you love most about Christmas?

With students from Swan Hill Primary School





ALLY ASTALL: I love decorating everything and putting pretty lights up out the front.



HARRY STEWART: I love when the elves visit on Christmas Eve and leave cereal on the ground.



MYLES ELLIS: I love getting to celebrate with family and putting up the Christmas tree.



JOS LEHMANN: I love when the elves (Lloyd and Tom) come from the North Pole and put toilet paper all over our pool and sail on it.



WILLEM KESSELS: I love helping to decorate the Christmas tree with mum and dad and my sister. I like placing the Christmas balls on there.

What do you love most about Christmas?

With students from Swan Hill Christian School





GRACEE:
I like the presents
because you get
to open something
without knowing what
it is.



OCHOR:
I like Nan's trifle, being together with family and going to Lake Boga.



ADELE:
We have lots of family get together, with the giving and receiving of presents.



NOAH:
Christmas is when
Jesus was born, and I
like getting Lego as a
present.



KAELANI:
It means putting the star on the top of the tree as it's Jesus' birthday.







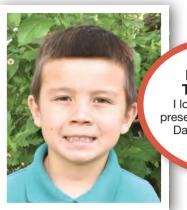
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What do you love most about Christmas?

With students from Nyah District Primary School



BRADLEY TWADDLE: I love opening my presents on Christmas Day and getting a surprise.



JACK PRETTY: I love the presents and that they might be what I asked Santa for. I also like going to the Nyah Christmas Carnival and going on the rides.



PATRICK WITHOOS: I love that I get presents and get to go shopping.



WILLIAM HUNGERFORD: I love getting to unwrap my presents and having a big family dinner with my cousins.



HUNTER BRUNHOEVER-SOBEY: I love everything about Christmas especially the presents.



ISOBEL WILKINSON: I love being with my family because that is the most important thing about Christmas.



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Christmas hampers are on the way

NOEL FISHER

THE Grain Shed Church of Christ has been a hive of activity as community groups came together to pack 800 hampers full of essentials as the Christmas season approaches.

More than 30 volunteers gathered in the past fortnight, setting up a production line that Henry Ford would have been proud of.

Trucks packed with dry goods, such as pasta, long-life milk, biscuits, noodles and many other items, came and went throughout the day as the volunteers picked up purchased groceries from businesses around town.

Grain Shed communities coordinator Jodie Grant said the hampers came about in 2020 during the COVID lockdowns.

"We used to do a Christmas lunch originally and when COVID hit we had to change the way we did things," Ms Grant said.

"The hampers started as small shopping bag, but since then there has just been more and more need in the community and it has morphed into this.

"The idea of the hampers is that it is nonperishable food, therefore people can spend more money on the Christmas that they want to with their families.'

Most of the money to buy the goods is donated through the church congregation and a small amount from local businesses.

Although this was an ongoing project through the year, the demand for the hampers at Christmas time increases.

The church works in with a range of community services such as Mallee District Aboriginal Services, Swan Hill Council, The Salvation Army and other outreach groups.

"People feel more comfortable going to their familiar service providers than approaching the church directly for help," Ms Grant said.

"We have people from some of those services here today packing as well.

"This is the first time we have done this and it is great as people from the different services get to meet and come together."

Community service providers are in the best position to know who the neediest people are within their groups and can get the hampers to the people that need them the most.

The church also holds some hampers so that people can go directly to pick them up Emily Westblade helps fill hampers.

Pictures: Noel Fisher





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deep for teens

MEAGAN McGREGOR

THE Swan Hill office of The Salvation Army is getting into the spirit of Christmas, with their annual Christmas Cheer campaign already well under way.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement office Allira Fry said donations were needed for teenagers.

"We always find a lot of gifts are donated for the two to 12 age bracket but we are often lacking in gifts for teenagers," she said.

"It does not need to be an expensive item - something like movie tickets, gift cards or a piece of sporting equipment is perfect.

"People often think of the little ones at Christmas, but everyone should be able to celebrate by receiving or giving a gift at Christmas.'

Ms Fry requested that gifts be new and not wrapped prior to donation as The Salvos' system allows parents to come in and select their own gifts to suit their children.

She also said The Salvos had seen an increased need for support due to interest rate rises and unemployment.

"We really want to help ensure vulnerable families are able to experience a magical Christmas and that no parent or child misses out," she said.

"It is a tough year financially for some families and we hope that this can ease the burden somewhat."

The Salvos also offer support for food hampers and application forms for Christmas cheer can be collected at The Salvation Army office at 190 Beveridge Street, or by calling Ms Fry on 0403 318 985.









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Get your wishlist to Santa

LETTERS have begun to make the long journey from Swan Hill to the North Pole, as local children share their dreamed-for

This year's Australia Post Santa Mail mailbox is located at Swan Hill Regional Library, where children have the chance to communicate with Santa Claus.

Swan Hill Regional Libraries manager Camille Cullinan said it was wonderful to be part of the Santa Mail tradition, while also helping children learn about mail.

"It's just great to see the children getting involved in the Christmas spirit and having that opportunity to write what they would like to Santa," she said.

"We've done this for several vears. while it hadn't necessarily been the Australia Post Santa Mail, it was something we did ourselves. Obviously those letters still made their way to Santa.

"This is a great opportunity for kids to actually gain an understanding of what letters about, the process of actually writing a letter, putting them in an envelope and then posting them off.

"When you think about it, writing letters isn't something that people do a lot of any-

"We love to see and hear the kids enjoying the library. It engages them with other kids and brings parents together as well. lt's just such a social space for all.

The library can open the world up to anybody, even Santa."

Letters should be addressed to Santa, North Pole, 9999 with a name and return



Sutton Simmonds, Zach Campbell, Maya Campbell and Miles Simmonds ponder what they want from Santa this Christmas.

RIGHT: Miles Simmonds and Maya Campbell send off their letters to Santa at Swan Hill Regional Library. Pictures: Nick Moseley

address on the back of the envelope.

They should also have a 65-cent Christmas-card-only stamp affixed to the front, before being placed in the special Santa Mail letterbox, any red street posting box

or the local Australia Post branch.

More information about Australia Post's Santa Mail can be found online at www. auspost.com.au/santamail

Nick Moselev









Planting seed of support

MEAGAN McGREGOR

THE Christmas tree is a long-held tradition that has embedded itself into Australian cel-

With many believing it should not be displayed until December 1, it encourages the spirit of Christmas into homes for the month of December and is an exciting prelude to Christmas Day celebrations.

Decorated with lights, tinsel and baubles and usually topped off with an angel or star at its peak, the tree has undergone transformations over time.

Thought to have first been used in Germany in the 16th century, they were originally made from wooden planks.

That evolved into live trees over time, mostly spruce, pine or fir.

For Swan Hill resident Bethany Dodgshun, the live Christmas tree embodies the spirit of Christmas and she has developed a way to keep the tradition gleaming while also donating to a good cause.

Swan Hill Christian School students Micah and Adele Dodgshun select a tree for the family

The Swan Hill Christian College parent began ordering live trees from Daylesford in 2017 as a fundraiser with all profits being donated.

This year, funds will go to the Swan Hill branch of The Salvation Army to help ensure everyone experiences a little Christmas joy.

"Growing up we always had a live Christmas tree in our home and it holds a special place in my heart," Ms Dodgshun said. "I wanted to share that joy with others so

we started taking orders for live trees and chose the Salvos as the recipient as they are able to reach the people who might need a hand through their Christmas Cheer program.

"It was great to know the proceeds stayed within the local community.3

Over the past six years the initiative has grown and more than \$20,000 has been do-

This year, \$1500 was raised through the sale of 47 trees varying in size from five to seven feet

The school donated trees to Logan Lodge, Alcheringa and Hope Aged Care.

Swan Hill Hire was thanked for donating a truck to collect the trees. They have supported every year since 2017.

To get on board with the fundraiser in 2024, visit www.swanhillchristmastrees.com.au

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Hitting the road for Christmas cheer

ROADS thundered with the sound of engines from 84 motorbikes and 52 cars last month for the ninth annual Gannawarra Memorial Toy Run.

The large group that had gathered from as far afield as Melbourne and Bendigo set off from Leitchville.

They headed for Kerang, where a traditional Lions Club breakfast of bacon and egg rolls awaited.

After stopping in Barham for morning tea, the group ended up in Cohuna for lunch.

Over two days on the November 18 weekend, more than \$8000 was raised through entry fees and donations, and more was to come from sponsors.

Organiser John Webb said the money and toys collected would stay in the district, distributed by the neighbourhood houses in Cohuna and Kerang and St Vincent de Paul.

"There have been a lot of changes from when we first started," Mr Webb said.

"Originally we did hampers and toys, but then COVID came along and we weren't able to pack hampers.

"During this time we gave out vouchers

for local supermarkets so that people that were less fortunate were able get some tucker for over Christmas.

"Following that the Privacy Act came in and we weren't able to know where the tovs and hampers were going.

Government regulation didn't deter the volunteers and that was when it was decided to bring the charitable agencies on

"These organisations provide hampers to vulnerable families all year round, so the money now goes to providing food hampers all year round," Mr Webb added.

"For the toys we don't see names, just age and gender of the child, and we make up the parcel to suit.

"This year we had 438 kids that we provided toys for, up from 406 last year.

"Last year we put more than \$20,000 back into the community through the neighbourhood houses and Vinnies and we expect it will be similar or more this year."

The event was named the memorial toy run as a way to remember all of those who had helped out over the years and since passed away.



BELOW: Participating motorcyclists travel across the Murray River to

collect donated items

Riders and cars gather for thge Gannawarra Memorial Toy Run. Pictures: Brook Shaune-Bould

The 2 x 16 ad SH1081024 for WORKLOCKER SWAN HILL is missing or incomplete.



The 4 x 16 ad SH1081040 for COUNTRY TRACKS is missing or incomplete.

Hitting the road for Christmas cheer

BELOW: Participating motorcyclists travel across the Murray River to collect donated items.



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Riders and cars gather for thge Gannawarra Memorial Toy Run. Pictures: Brook Shaune-Bould







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EXTENDED WEEKEND SHOPPING

- Saturday 2nd December: 9am 2pm
- Sunday 3rd December: 10am 2pm
- Saturday 9th December: 9am 2pm Sunday 10th December: 10am - 2pm
- Saturday 16th December: 9am 2pm
- Sunday 17th December: 10am 2pm
- Saturday 23rd December 9am 2pm







Keeping the need local

PHOEBE DOYLE

MAKING a difference in the local community is what Better Bookkeeping Management aims to do with their Christmas Gift Donation

Working closely with local service A Good Kitchen, who provide meals for people in need, BBKM are collecting donations of toys and gifts for children aged 0-18 so that they don't miss out on Christmas Day.

"Anyone who chooses to donate can come in and take an ornament off the tree, it gives you some ideas and also the age to buy for, and then they can go and buy something," BBKM manager Sam Cottingham said.

"Then they come back and register what is inside their gift so that A Good Kitchen can give them to the most appropriate person."

BBKM marketing manager Meghan O'Bryan said it was important to the BBKM team that the donations stay in the local commu-

"There are lots of charities out there that do very similar things to what we are doing, much larger charities that probably get a lot more donations," she said.

"But no small town ever sees any of that it all goes to the cities.

"We are wanting this to be something for our town that benefits the locals and gives them a leg up instead of missing out."

An annual event for BBKM, this year they have expanded their initiative to Kerang, wanting to help those struggling in the broader community, not just Swan Hill.

"Coming from a small country town, you



BBKM's Meghan O'Bryan, Sam Cottingham and Carlie Marra with some of the donations they have already received for their Christmas Gift Donation Drive. Pictures: Phoebe Doyle

always think about your community and building within your community, and that's what it's all about - it's about making sure that everybody else has the same opportunities as you do," Ms Cottingham said.

While they have already received 56 donations, Ms O'Bryan said there is certainly still a need for many more.

"Fifty-six probably sounds like a lot, but I think a lot of people misunderstand the need for it in this town, especially in this current economy," she said.

"Everyone is wanting to donate to families that need things, but they want to donate needs, which is lovely as well and they are very appreciative of that, but the kids are the ones that miss out they don't get toys on Christmas when everyone else at school gets toys on Christmas.

"So that's why they have asked us to focus

on children this year - so that every child gets something that they can take to school and show everyone what they got."

Donations are still being taken up until 12 noon on December 18. Gifts can be taken to BBKM Plan Management at Suite 9, Beveridge Dome in Swan Hill, or the Gannawarra Times office at 24 Scoresby Street, Kerang.



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THAI PRAWN SALAD

It's the combination of the zingy dressing, fresh coriander and delicious prawns that'll make this dish a contender for a summer favourite.

Ingredients - serves 6

- 1kg raw prawns, thawed
- 1/2 cup Thai-style dressing
- 200g dried flat rice noodles
- 1 Lebanese cucumber, halved lengthways, thickly sliced
- 200g Sweet Solanato tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 bunch coriander, leaves picked
- 1 long red chilli, thinly sliced into rounds
- 1/3 cup fried shallots
- 1 lime, cut into wedges

Method

- 1. Combine prawns and 1/4 cup dressing in a bowl. Set aside for 10 minutes to marinate.
- Meanwhile, cook noodles according to packet instructions.
- Preheat a greased barbecue plate on medium-high. Cook prawns for 2 minutes each side or until cooked through and golden.
- Combine noodles, cucumber, tomato, coriander and chilli in a large bowl. Transfer to a serving platter. Top with prawns. Sprinkle with shallots. Serve with lime and remaining dressing.

LEMON AND GARLIC SALMON SKEWERS

Capture the spirit of Australia's festive season with these 20-minute salmon skewers.

Ingredients - serves 4

- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 lemons, 1 zested and juiced, 1 cut into wedges
- 1 bunch dill, chopped
- 1/2 cup Flora Buttery Spread
- 900g skin-off salmon fillets, cut into 3cm cubes
- 1 baquette, sliced, chargrilled
- 8 metal skewers

Method

- Combine garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, dill and cup spread in a small saucepan over low heat. Cook for 4 minutes or until melted.
- Thread 3 salmon cubes onto each metal skewer. Brush salmon with spread mixture. Heat a barbecue grill on high heat.
- Cook skewers for 4 minutes, turning, or until salmon is cooked to your liking. Transfer skewers to a serving board and drizzle with remaining spread mixture. Serve with bread topped with remaining spread and lemon wedges.



WAGON WHEEL CHRISTMAS COOKIES

The kids will love helping to decorate these tasty and fun Christmas snacks.

Ingredients for 16 servings

- 20g dark chocolate, chopped
- 100g white cooking chocolate, chopped
- 16 candy eyeballs
- 8 red M&M's
- 16 Wagon Wheels
- 16 pretzels
- 100g white chocolate, chopped
- 1 green jelly snake
- 24 mini red M&M's

Method

- Place dark chocolate and white cooking chocolate in separate microwave-safe bowls. Microwave each on high in 30-second increments until melted.
- To make reindeer faces, use the picture as a guide and attach 2 candy eyeballs and 1 M&M to 1 biscuit with a little melted dark chocolate. Repeat to make 8 in total with 16 candy eyeballs, 8 M&M's and 8 biscuits.
- Using the picture as a guide, attach 2 pretzels to 1 biscuit with a little melted dark chocolate, holding pretzels in place until secure to create antlers.
 Repeat to make 8 pairs of reindeer antlers in total with 16 pretzels.
- 4. Place 8 remaining biscuits on the board. Spoon melted white chocolate into a snap-lock bag. Snip off one corner. Using the picture as a guide, pipe chocolate on each biscuit to create "custard" on Christmas puddings.
- 5. Thinly slice jelly snake diagonally into 16 pieces. Using the picture as a guide, arrange 2 snake pieces and 3 mini M&M's on 1 biscuit to create leaves and cherries. Repeat to make 8 puddings in total with 16 jelly snake pieces and 24 mini M&M's. Set all biscuits aside for 30 minutes or until set. Serve.





Christmas craft ideas

Upcycled candle holders

THESE handmade candle holders not only dress up your Christmas table, but are a great way to use empty bottles.

Create in a variety of bottle shapes and throw in some cherries or cranberries for a pop of colour.

Method

- 1. Place evergreens into bottles and fill with water.
- Rub sticky candle wax to the bottom of a taper candle and place in the bottle opening. If your candle doesn't fit into the opening, carve away excess wax until it fits securely.
- Replace the water every few days to keep greens looking fresh.



Sock Snowmen

THIS rice filled sock snowman will make a great decoration or table ornament on Christmas Day and is easy enough for the kids to make.

Materials

- 1 white-colored sock 1 additional sock for the hat
- Rice
- Ribbon or fabric
- Wool thread
- Small buttons
- Round Beads
- Cotton Ball pom pom
- Scissors
- Glue

Method

- Fill the bottom of your sock with rice (approx 1 cup) and then tie the white thread around the belly region to make two segments.
- Fill the top part of your sock with rice, tie off and kneed to even out your body and head shapes
- 3. Use your second sock to create the hat in your colour of choice.



- Glue the beads on for eyes, the pom pom for the nose and buttons for the snowman's chest.
- 5. Use scrap material/fabric to create the scarf.











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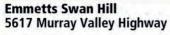
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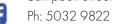


G

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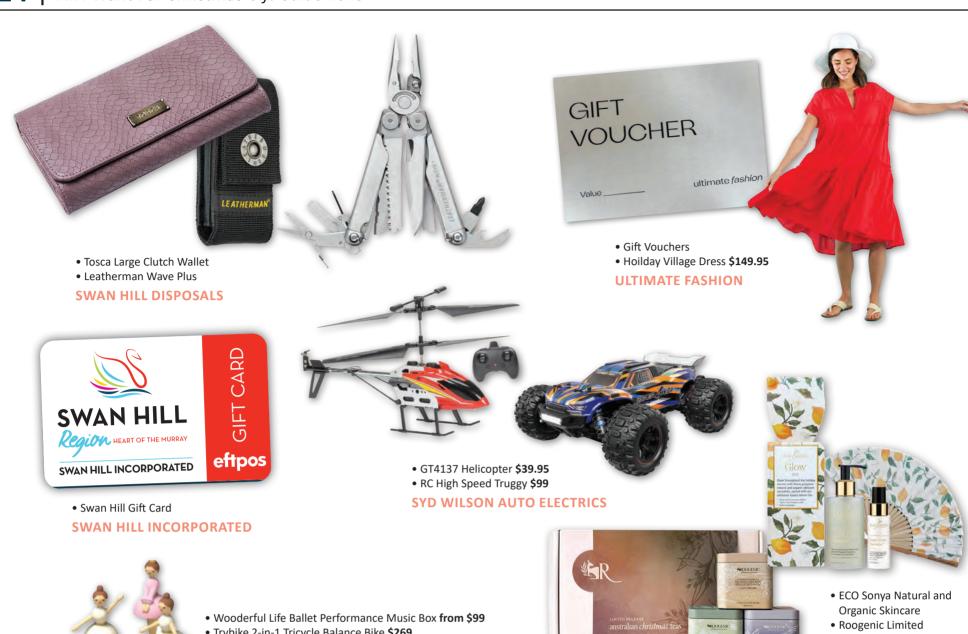


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Towns switch on festivitie

MURRAY River Council is looking to add a little sparkle to local communities as it once again launches its Christmas-themed outdoor lighting and decorations experience.

Murray River Council communications coordinator Courtney Dean said council hoped the decorations would bring Christmas cheer to the area.

"Christmas decorations will be temporarily installed in a number of local parks and spaces to brighten up towns and bring communities together across the council area," she said.

"We hope residents can make it down to their local park or reserve to enjoy the bursts of colour."

The lights are free to visit every night from 7pm to 11pm between December 2 and January 4.

Residents can check-out the pop-up lighting experience throughout December at Barham, Riverside Park; Koraleigh, General Store; Mathoura, Soldiers Memorial Park; Moama, Cobb Highway and Meninya Street; Murray Downs, RFS Shed; Tooleybuc, Mensforth Park and Wakool, Playground Park.

At the neighbouring Balranald Shire, the township is packed with things to do over the Christmas break and it is a great opportunity for locals and visitors alike to take in some of the sights and activities that the region has to offer.

Rich in natural beauty and historic sites, there this is a great opportunity for locals to become a tourist at home and reacquaint

with the things that bring visitors from across the country.

If you like a pub meal, Balranald has a great offering of locations.

A good place to start the journey is the award-winning Balranald Discovery Centre, which is not just a tourist information centre, but an entire precinct with historic buildings and art in the form of unique sculptures dotted throughout the grounds.

Explore a 19th century gaol, the district's first school and the Malcolm Building Museum as well as finding out about other historic sites in the area such as the Yanga or Mungo Woolsheds.

Only an hour away from Swan Hill, it is an ideal short get away for those in surrounding towns to explore what is on offer

close to home. For the art lover, Balranald is renowned for the quirky street art that will appeal to those that enjoy absorbing creativity as they walk or drive around the town.

One of the best known is the Funky Frog Trail, paying homage the districts enviable status of having healthy frog populations which are indicators of a healthy environment.

Created by local panel beater, Roy Mann, has created 20 life-sized frog sculptures that appear in many public spaces and at businesses.

Another advantage of playing tourist at home is helping to keep the local economy ticking along, keeping money in the

Lighting up Swan F

SWAN HILL residents got into the spirit of Christmas by lighting up the town one home

Entries for the Christmas lights display closed on December 1 with a strong team of contenders registering to win a prize pool of

This year, The Guardian will sponsor the competition with first prize of \$1000 to the property voted as the best in the competition.

Second place will receive \$500 doated by BBKM and third place will be awarded \$250 from Mallee Milk Distributors.

Rav White Real Estate is offering a \$500 prize to the best business Christmas display while GJ Gardiner will award \$500 for the People's Choice Best Residence Award.

A \$250 prize will be awarded to the best inflatable on display donated by VHM Limit-

Judging has started and will be completed by December 16 with winners announced on December 19 in The Guardian.

Be sure to check out the glittering entrants and other homes around town who help create the spirit of Christmas in our community.



Swan Hill region residents have got into the Christmas spirit by lighting up their homes.

Picture: Meagan McGregor





61 Victoria Street, Kerang Phone: 5452 1172



COLOURING COMPETITION

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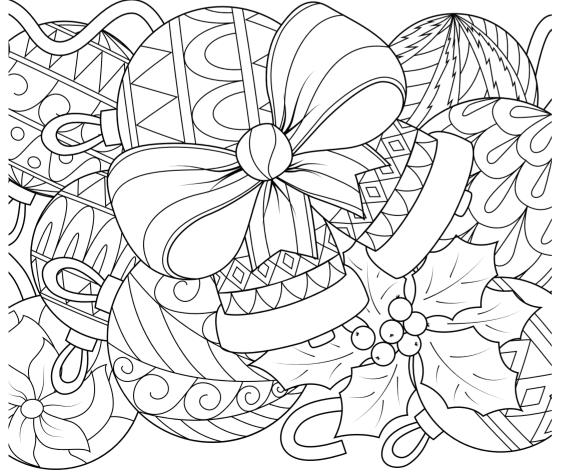


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