

Camden Chamber of Commerce Tourism and Industry has organised and hosted Light Up Camden for over 20 years. After Camden Show it has been the most successful event in our town bringing some 10,000 people to Argyle Street.

Light Up Camden in the past has been heavily supported by local business, Camden Service Clubs and organisations, generous sponsors including Westpac and ANZ, and a community grant and in kind support from Council. Stallholders from far and wide have brought new and exciting products and services to our Argyle Street.

"The large crowds enjoyed the stalls, music, dancing, food, the rides, the flyover and of course the lighting of the Christmas Tree" said Camden Chamber Executive member, Karen Stewart, an Argyle Street business owner.

This year Council has awarded the community grant and in-kind support to an alternative event. This new event, a jacaranda festival, has been timed for the weekend after Light Up Camden. "At no time prior to the Council decision was Chamber invited to meet with Council or the organisers of the proposed new event" Chamber President, Maryann Strickling said.

In its decision to support the event proposed by the Argyle Business Collective, Council also moved the Lighting of the Christmas Tree and the Mayor's Christmas Card announcement - both traditional LUC events, to the proposed Camden Jacaranda Festival.

"Council advised this was due to Chamber's failure to acknowledge their sponsorship of the 2017 event", Ms Strickling said before adding, "Despite this view, Council at no time made contact with Chamber expressing their concerns although recognition of their support in 2017 was as it had been for many years prior".

"We contacted Council and the Argyle Business Collective following media reports about the new festival and although the founder of ABC has responded he has declined a meeting", said Maryann Strickling.

"Chamber of course supports community events such as proposed but are disappointed this event was programmed and agreed to for the week following Light Up Camden".

Ms Strickling added, "such programming places members of the community, supporting sponsors, stallholders and school groups in the unenviable position of deciding which event to support".

In light of any potential conflict and so as not to disadvantage the Camden community and Argyle Street Business owners, Camden Chamber of Commerce Tourism and Industry has decided not to conduct a Light Up Camden event in 2018. "Despite the tremendous support evident for this event we will use our energy and resources to support Camden business and highlight the unique and local offerings and services available in Camden, and look towards 2019" added Chamber Vice President Pieter Versluis.

He further added; "we may ask why the Argyle Business Collective and Council did not approach Chamber before the decision and seek to bring the two events together - after all, are we not all interested in Camden first and foremost?".