

A Christmas tale



MORNINGTON
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Thank you for your query regarding Mornington Christmas decorations.

After more than a decade of being on the receiving end of community feedback, (particularly online comments that have often been quite nasty and unpleasant), Mornington Chamber of Commerce (MCOC) would like to take this opportunity to share some factual background surrounding Main Street's Christmas decorations.

Before we start, it is worth noting MCOC is a not-for-profit association that comprises a volunteer group of representatives from local businesses; we are a Traders' Association. We are **not** a government body, nor are we affiliated in any way with the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

What does MCOC do?

MCOC organises a number of **FREE community events** for everyone to enjoy including:

1. Mornington Winter Music Festival over the King's Birthday weekend
2. FREE Christmas Carols/Music in the Park
3. School holiday activities on Market days (FREE face painting, balloon twisting, musicians etc)
4. Mornington's Biggest Morning Tea supporting the Cancer Council

Additionally, MCOC also:

- manages all aspects of the iconic Main Street Mornington Wednesday market (the longest running street market in Victoria). Funds from the market stallholders assist with funding community events and Christmas decorations
- organises and distributes branded shopping totes
- manages the social media
- organises free podcasts for businesses to be part of The Connection podcast
- manages the Main Street Mornington website
- conducts regular print and digital media to promote the area
- sends out regular newsletters to keep the community engaged
- liaises with the Shire as a voice for businesses, often advocating on behalf of our members

A Christmas tale... the story so far



Some frequently asked questions

Who is responsible for Christmas decorations in Main Street?

The answer is no one; not the Shire, not the Chamber of Commerce. There is no obligation for Christmas decorations to be provided. However, over 10 years ago, the Chamber CHOSE to take on this task (and the subsequent costs) in a bid to bring a little festive cheer to the town. This was a voluntary decision and one that can easily be revoked.

Who pays for the Christmas decorations?

The Chamber of Commerce pays, using funds that have been generated by the Wednesday market. On average, Christmas decorations and signage cost approximately \$5-7,000. This cost covers design, printing, installation, and removal of coreflute signs, banners, and flags. It is worth noting that the market income fluctuates due to stallholder numbers.

Does the Shire provide any funding?

No, the Shire does not provide any funding to Mornington for Christmas decorations, nor to any of the other 41 townships in the area. Sorrento, Mt Eliza, Mornington and Hastings are the only townships that have a Chamber of Commerce that chooses to take on that responsibility. The Shire may provide funding for Christmas events via its Community Events Grant rounds each year that are made by application and assessed case by case.

Who decides what decorations are created and installed?

The Chamber of Commerce makes that decision, based on available funds and resources. For the past 10 years, the Chamber has provided for the following Christmas decorations (we have included photo images decorations from over the years for your reference):

- 21 banners on the United Energy light poles positioned down Main Street
- 6 flags on Nepean Highway
- Up to 60 coreflute pole wraps with a Christmas message positioned down Main Street
- In recent years we have engaged local kids to showcase their original artworks

Why can't you put Christmas lights across the street?

Main Street belongs to Vic Roads so approval is the first obstacle. Secondly, each impacted landlord would need to agree to have lighting attached to their building. Lastly, who covers the cost of the power to run the lights?

Why can't you put lights in majority of the trees?

In 2024, the most recent quote (from Glow Worm Lighting) to professionally install fairy lights was **\$5000 per tree**. For the lights to be on mains power, this would need to be installed underground and allocated to a business (which business would want to pay for this)?

In 2024 we supplied and installed fairy lights on the 3 trees on Main Street at Empire Street Mall. This was only possible as there is a power source there.

Let's not forget, we live in the southern hemisphere where daylight savings means it's not dark enough for lights until nearly 9pm during the summer/Christmas period.

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Some frequently asked questions (continued)

What about solar lights?

This option has been explored many times over the years and there simply isn't anything currently on the market that is recommended or up to the task. According to Glow Worm Lighting, "In terms of power, there just really aren't any good solar products out there. We only offer a low voltage powered option. In streets like Little Stanley Street, Southbank and Given & La Trobe Terrace, Paddington in Brisbane, we have used a combination of sourcing power from the tenancy near the tree or from community power such as council light posts". This option could be considered if a suitable product became available in the future (again, subject to available funds).

Why can't you put up a Christmas tree?

We did. in 2018. And it got stolen on the first night that it was installed (despite being attached to a pole). The 2nd tree was donated by a local trader and we found it pushed to the ground and ruined and urinated on. There is always a high risk of vandalism and theft with anything that is left on the street, particularly overnight. There is also the issue of where it would be stored throughout the year.

What has MCOC done for Christmas in 2024?

- 21 Banners/6 flags/60 coreflutes (as per every year)
- Children's Art Gallery (Empire Street Mall)
- Timber Christmas Tree (Empire Street Mall) - made by local Men's Shed and decorated by Megan at Colourful learning Toy Store
- Letterbox to Santa (Empire Street Mall) - made by local Men's Shed and decorated by Indy from Farrell's Bookshop
- Get your photos with Santa (Monday December 23rd from 10am-12noon)
- Free face painting with Faery Emma (Monday December 23rd)
- Free balloon twisting (Monday December 23rd)
- Free music by The Treblettes (Monday December 23rd)
- PLUS **FREE community event**, Mornington's Community Christmas, 4-8.30pm on Saturday December 14th at Mornington Park

What are the main issues going forward?

- Cost to purchase / create decorations
- Approvals / permits
- Installation and pull-down costs
- OH&S considerations (works need to be done late at night / involves high work)
- Vandalism / theft
- Ongoing costs (power)
- Storage
- Manpower

If you feel passionately about Christmas decorations in Main Street and believe you could achieve better outcomes, we welcome anyone in the community forming a working committee to manage this issue.

We would happily work alongside this committee and share all relevant information and insights.

Please reach out to MCOC via market@morningtonchamber.com.au

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2014 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.

2015 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.
Bin wraps



2018 A cut tree purchased from local farm by MCOG with the intention to buy some more to install along main Street. It was stolen on the first night despite being attached to the pole.

A local business donated a second tree which was vandalised and urinated on after day 1.



2019 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.

2020 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.

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2021 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.



2022 Coreflute pole wraps.
Banners.
Flags.



2023 Flags with Children's artwork, coreflute Christmas trees with and without children's artwork, Christmas tree pole wraps and banners.



2024 Flags, banners, coreflute pole wraps and Children's Art Gallery in Empire Mall. The Men's Shed made a wooden tree and Colourful Learning Toystore decorated it. The Men's Shed made a wooden mailbox and Farrell's Bookshop decorated it. Fairy Lights in 3 trees in Empire Mall.