



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Council Denies Permit for Maitreya Festival**

**11 February 2016**

Buloke Shire Council on Wednesday night declined a licence application and issued a notice of intention to refuse a planning permit for the use of Wooroonook Lakes for the staging of the Maitreya Festival scheduled for next month. Council was left with no acceptable option other than to decline the request to use the land despite working to the best of its abilities with the proponent over the past year. Over many months, Council repeatedly provided the promoter with information about what would be required but they still did not provide the necessary information, reports and arrangements.

The proposed festival would have provided much needed money and turn-over for the Charlton community at a time when it is suffering badly from drought. It is hard to see what else could have been done by Council to assist the applicant. However, to proceed with the incomplete proposal would have brought financial risk on the entire Shire and the planning permit would have been illegal.

In a letter to the applicant on 2 September 2015, it was clearly stated that in order for a licence to be issued for the event, Council would require the following information prior to 1 February 2016;

- Approved planning permit
- Insurance policy indemnifying Council and the Management Committee against any claims for injury
- Signed agreements with all service providers for the event including security firms, first aiders, Ambulance Victoria, fire safety providers and lifeguards
- Payment of any bonds set by Council and payment of fees required
- Agreed and endorsed Traffic Management Plan
- Agreed and endorsed Emergency Management Plan
- Agreed and endorsed Environmental Management Plan
- Relevant written approval from Building Surveyor, Environmental Health Officer and Liquor Licensing Victoria

In addition to this letter, Council's Planning Officer and Chief Executive Officer sent correspondence to the applicant, met with the applicant and his representatives and telephoned on numerous occasions clearly articulating the information and timeframes required to be met in order for Council to be able to make a decision.

At the time of reporting to the Ordinary Meeting of Council for February 2016 the applicant had not supplied all the required documentation nor shown evidence of insurance.

The applicant has not provided a Cultural Heritage Management Plan as needed for this site. As the applicant has been informed, this is a legal requirement before Council can grant a planning permit.

Also unresolved by the promoter was gaining access to a parcel of land adjacent to the Council controlled area that is needed under the applicant's own proposal. The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) has stated it will not approve the use of this land which is integral to the event. This land is required for the festival to operate its proposed vehicle entry off the St Arnaud-Wycheproof Road.

Currently there is no evidence of any insurance policy in place indemnifying Council as the Committee of Management of Wooroonook Lakes against any claims for injury. This would expose the entire Shire and its community to significant financial risk.

Council also issued a Notice of Intention to Refuse a Permit for the Maitreya Festival after extensive discussion and consideration. Council understands this will be of great disappointment to many people and community groups. A Planning Permit would have been illegal and invalid if Council had issued a Notice of Decision to Grant.

"It is with great disappointment that Council has had to decline a licence and issue a notice of intention to refuse a planning permit for the use of the Wooroonook Lakes for staging the Maitreya Festival next month. The Council and the community have been let down by a promoter who simply could not get the needed information and reports together to enable his application to be approved. Despite Council repeatedly listing and requesting the information needed, the applicant did not provide the required information with his application. This meant that Council could not legally approve the Festival at the Lakes and considerable benefit to the community has been foregone. Arts and cultural events are few and far between in the area. I am sure that Charlton, the wider Buloke community and ticket holders feel very let down.", said Mayor, Cr Reid Mather.

**End release**

**For further information contact Travis Fitzgibbon on 1300 520 520**