Triple treat for tour operator

Tourism Central Australia award winners, from left: Richard Black, Denise Horner, Mark Swindel, Chris Hill, Chris Satori, Mandy Vaughan, Meg Foster, Terry Hooten, Darren Vuolanne and Toby Kundert.

Minister’s absence noticed at awards

Bryan Littlely

TOURISM Minister and Minister for Central Australia Matt Conlan was a noticeable no-show at the Tourism Central Australia Awards.

There was no apology given, prompting several tourism operators to ask: ‘‘Where the bloody hell is he?‘‘

Mr Conlan told the Centralian Advocate yesterday he needed some family time as he would be away from home town Alice Springs for the rest of the month.

‘‘A bloke is allowed to have a couple of days off, surely?‘‘ Mr Conlan said.

‘‘I’m away for the whole of the month with parliamentary sittings and I’m going overseas to Japan and China to drive business for these tourism operators.‘‘

Tourism NT was represented by chief executive officer Tony Maxwell at the presentation night.

Mr Conlan did officially open the Tourism Central Australia conference earlier in the day where he announced the NT Government’s Digital Activation Program.

Under the program, tourism businesses in Central Australia can apply for up to $3000 to help with digital marketing.

‘‘Digital marketing is absolutely critical to our plans to grow the Territory’s tourism industry,‘‘ Mr Conlan said.

‘‘The online digital world is growing and our NT operators need to be in front of the game to remain competitive.‘‘

‘‘We want to help our local operators get up to speed and this $3000 will go a long way towards helping to grow their businesses, with the funding able to be used on a range of digital marketing activities.‘‘

‘‘This is a significant $1 million investment in our industry that will help return the sector to growth and reverse serious declines in visitation to the Territory,‘‘ which occurred under the previous government.‘‘

Applications for the $3000 grant part of the program close on November 18. Funding for a web developer is included to help those businesses who require assistance in implementing their new marketing campaigns.

To make a grant application, go to www.tourismnt.com.au/DigitalMarketing.aspx or call Tourism NT on 8999 3936.

Jessica Brown

ULURU Camel Tours was the star business at Friday night’s 2013 Tourism Central Australia Awards, taking out multiple accolades.

It claimed three of the eight awards – the Chifley Alice Springs New Tourism Innovation Award and the Imparja Small Tourism Operator Award, plus managing director Chris Hill winning the Voyages Ayers Rock Industry Achiever Award.

‘‘It’s a real honour, especially when you think about the company we were sharing on the night,‘‘ Mr Hill said.

‘‘We were surprised but not shocked – we’re a hard-working company so it’s great to be recognised,‘‘ Mr Hill said.

‘‘We would have liked to have celebrated more but we’re so busy,‘‘ he said.

‘‘We’ll throw a party for all our staff (later) because they are our number one asset.‘‘

A combination of businesses and individuals were presented with awards at the event, which took place at the Alice Springs Turf Club.

Winning businesses included Lausters Hotel Casino, which took home the Yobo Naja Large Tourism Operator Award, and XXXX Gold, awarded the Centralian Advocate Festival and Events Award for its 2013 Alice Springs Cup Carnival.

Individual winners included Darren Vuolanne from Australian Transit Group Downunder Tours for the Commercial Passenger Vehicle Driver of the Year, Toby Kundert from OnTour NT with the Australian Transit Group Downunder Young Achiever Award and Denise Horner taking home the Barry Bucholtz Award for Excellence.

The awards acknowledge, recognise and celebrate the tourism industry in Central Australia.