



## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report recommends that the Council agrees to amend the Local Provisions Schedule to insert the Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan.

## 2 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

**Applicant:**

Northern Midlands Council

**Owner:**

Various

**Zone:**

Various

**Codes/Specific Areas Plans:**

Proposes to insert a Specific Area Plan

**Classification under the Scheme:**

Planning scheme amendment

**Existing Use:**

Various

**Decision Date:**

There is no statutory time for Council to decide to prepare a draft amendment of its own motion.

**Recommendation:**

That Council agree to and certify draft planning scheme amendment 24-2026 and exhibit for 28 days.

**Planning Instrument:**

*Tasmanian Planning Scheme - Northern Midlands, version 16, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026, LPS version 17, 19<sup>th</sup> March 2026.*

**Site:**

Various

On 16 March 2026, Council resolved to:

*a) Support in-principle the Dark Sky Lighting Policy as presented and implementation of the program so long as it aligns with national regulatory standards; and*

*b) Seek external funding for the implementation of the Dark Sky Program to support accreditation as a recognised Dark Sky Community.*

On 27 March 2026, the Chair of the Ross Local District Committee advised Council's Planning Department that Dark Sky International prefer eventual incorporation of the Policy in the planning scheme, and sought advice on to what degree Dark Sky friendly lighting policy is enforceable in Ross on new developments.

The policy is enforceable on new Council developments in Ross, but not on new private developments in Ross. The provisions of the policy would need to be incorporated into a Specific Area Plan.

## 3 STRATEGIC PLAN & INTEGRATED PRIORITY PLAN

### 3.1 Strategic Plan 2021-2027

The Strategic Plan 2021-2027 provides the guidelines within which Council operates.

**Lead: Serve with honesty, integrity, innovation and pride**

**Leaders with Impact**

**Strategic outcomes:**

- 1.1 Council is connected to the community
- 1.3 Management is efficient, proactive and responsible
- 1.4 Improve community assets responsibly and sustainably



**People: Culture and society - a vibrant future that respects the past**

**Sense of Place - Sustain, Protect, Progress**

**Strategic outcomes:**

- 3.3 Public assets meet future lifestyle challenges
- 3.4 Towns are enviable places to visit, live and work

**Place: Nurture our heritage environment**

**Cherish, Sustain our Landscape and Preserve, Protect Our Built Heritage for Tomorrow**

**Strategic outcomes:**

- 4.1 Cherish and sustain our landscape
- 4.2 Meet environmental challenges
- 4.3 Eco-tourism strongly showcases our natural beauties
- 4.4 Our heritage villages and towns are high value assets

### **3.2 Integrated Priority Projects Plan 2021**

Not applicable.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

On 16 March 2026 Council resolved to support in principle the Dark Sky Lighting Policy as presented and implementation of the program so long as it aligns with national regulatory standards.

## **5 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

***Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993***

### ***38. Decision in relation to request***

- (1) *A planning authority, before deciding whether to prepare a draft amendment of an LPS in relation to a municipal area in accordance with a request under section 37(1), must be satisfied that such a draft amendment of an LPS will meet the LPS criteria.*
- (2) *A planning authority, within 42 days after receiving a request under section 37(1) or a longer period allowed by the Commission, must –*
  - (a) *decide to agree to the amendment and prepare a draft amendment of the LPS; or*
  - (b) *decide to refuse to prepare the draft amendment of the LPS.*

### ***40D. Preparation of draft amendments***

*A planning authority –*

- (a) *must prepare a draft amendment of an LPS, and certify it under section 40F, within 42 days after receiving the request under section 37(1) to which the amendment relates, if –*
  - (i) *it decides under section 38(2) to prepare a draft amendment of an LPS; or*
  - (ii) *after reconsidering, in accordance with a direction under section 40B(4)(a), a request under section 37(1) whether to prepare a draft amendment of an LPS, it decides to prepare such an amendment; or*
- (b) may, of its own motion, prepare a draft amendment of an LPS; or*
- (c) *must, if it receives under section 40C(1) a direction to do so, prepare a draft amendment of an LPS and submit it to the Commission within the period specified in the direction or a longer period allowed by the Commission.*

### ***40F. Certification of draft amendments***

- (1) *A planning authority that has prepared a draft amendment of an LPS must consider whether it is satisfied that the draft amendment of an LPS meets the LPS criteria.*
- (2) *If a planning authority determines that –*
  - (a) *it is satisfied as to the matters referred to in subsection (1), the planning authority must certify the draft as meeting the requirements of this Act; or*
  - (b) *it is not satisfied as to the matters referred to in subsection (1), the planning authority must modify the draft so that it meets the requirements and then certify the draft as meeting those requirements.*



*(3) The certification of a draft amendment of an LPS under subsection (2) is to be by instrument in writing affixed with the common seal of the planning authority.*

*(4) A planning authority, within 7 days of certifying a draft amendment of an LPS under subsection (2), must provide to the Commission a copy of the draft and the certificate.*

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The costs associated with the draft amendment are provided for within existing budget allocations.

## **7 RISK ISSUES**

No risk issues are identified.

## **8 CONSULTATION WITH STATE GOVERNMENT**

Under the Act, Council must notify the following of the draft amendment:

*(a) the relevant agencies; and*

*(b) those State Service Agencies, or State authorities, that the planning authority considers may have an interest in the draft amendment of the LPS.*

## **9 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

Under section 40G of the Act, Council must publish an exhibition notice in relation to the draft amendment, inviting persons make a representation in relation to the draft amendment

Under section 40K of the Act any representations received must be considered by the Council and a statement provided to the Tasmanian Planning Commission as to the merit of each representation, a statement as to whether the amendment meets the requirements of the LPS criteria, and provide a recommendation in relation to the draft amendment.

As reported to the 16 March 2026 Council meeting in item 16.1 Northern Midlands Council Dark Sky Policy and Support of Ross as a Dark Sky Community:

*The Dark Sky lighting proposal has strong support from the Ross community, demonstrated through the active involvement of the Ross Local District Committee and the contribution of local organisations and individuals. The initiative has been community-led, with proponents undertaking significant preparatory work, including policy development, data collection, and public advocacy. Media coverage and ongoing engagement have further raised community awareness and support for the project. This level of local commitment indicates a high degree of community ownership and provides a strong foundation for successful implementation and long-term compliance should accreditation be achieved. The committee have committed to continuing to engage with the community and business community throughout the future steps of the program.*

## **10 OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER**

### **10.1 Decision in relation to request**

The planning authority can:

- decide to agree to the amendment and prepare a draft amendment to the LPS; or
- decide to refuse to prepare the draft amendment to the LPS.

### **10.2 Preparation of draft amendment**

A draft amendment has been prepared as shown in the recommendation of this report.

### **10.3 Certification of draft amendment**

- The planning authority must consider whether it is satisfied that the draft amendment meets the LPS criteria, see section 4.7.



- If the planning authority is satisfied that the draft amendment meets the LPS criteria, it must certify the draft as meeting the requirements of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act* ; or
- If the planning authority is not satisfied that the draft amendment meets the LPS criteria it must modify the draft so that it meets the requirements and then certify the draft as meeting those requirements.

## **11 OFFICER'S COMMENTS/CONCLUSION**

The attached Assessment Against LPS Criteria finds that the proposed amendment meets the LPS Criteria. It is recommended that Council agree to and certify draft amendment 24-2026 to insert NOR-S9.0 Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan in accordance with Attachment 1.

## **12 ATTACHMENTS**

1. Draft Amendment 24-2026 - NO R- S 9.0 Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan [**11.1.1** - 5 pages]
  2. Draft Amendment 24-2026 - NO R- S 9.0 Ross Dark Sky SAP - Assessment Against LPS Criteria [**11.1.2** - 78 pages]
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## DRAFT AMENDMENT 24-2026: NOR-S9.0 Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan

### ASSESSMENT AGAINST LPS CRITERIA

34(2) *The LPS criteria to be met by a relevant planning instrument are that the instrument –*

***(a) contains all the provisions that the SPPs specify must be contained in an LPS***

**Consideration:** The Local Provisions Schedule Requirements are at clause LP1.0 of the SPPs. These are: Zone Maps, Local Area Objectives, Particular Purpose Zones, Specific Area Plans, Site-specific Qualifications, Code Overlay Maps, and Code Lists in Tables.

The draft amendment is to insert a new Specific Area Plan – the Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan – to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule, consistent with clause LP1.0 of the SPPs.

This request has been brought to the Northern Midlands Council by the Chair of the Ross District Committee – a special committee of Council. Council supports Ross township's bid to be a Dark Sky Community (refer to minutes of 21 October 2024, attached).

***(b) is in accordance with section 32***

Under section 32:

*(3) An LPS may, if permitted to do so by the SPPs, include*

*(a) a particular purpose zone...*

*(b) a specific area plan, being a plan consisting of –*

*(i) a map or overlay that delineates a particular area of land; and*

*(ii) the provisions that are to apply to that land in addition to, in modification of, or in substitution for, a provision, or provisions, of the SPPs.*

*(c) a site-specific qualification, being a provision, or provisions, in relation to a particular area of land, that modify, are in substitution for, or are in addition to, a provision, or provisions, of the SPPs.*

*(4) An LPS may only include a provision referred to in subsection (3) in relation to an area of land if –*

*(a) a use or development to which the provision relates is of significant social, economic, or environmental benefit to the State, a region or a municipal area; or*

*(b) the area of land has particular environmental, economic, social or spatial qualities that require provisions, that are unique to the area of land, to apply to the land in substitution for, or in addition to, or modification of, the provisions of the SPPs.*

**Consideration:** The draft amendment is to insert a new specific area plan – the Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan – to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule under section 32(4)(b).

The draft amendment seeks to insert an SAP containing provisions to control the emission of artificial light to the night sky. This is necessary because:

- The SPPs include zone provisions that regulate discretionary uses by controlling the hours of operation of external lighting (excluding security lighting), managing the impact of security lighting on adjoining properties, and preventing the unreasonable loss of amenity to adjacent sensitive uses. However, they do not include zone provisions that control light emission to the night sky more generally.
- The SPPs do not include a Code that regulates light emission to the night sky in a general or comprehensive way.

The Ross District Committee identified the area of land as being the outer boundary of The Boulevards, Nivelles Street, Colbeck Street, and Portugal Street, and the town side boundary of the Macquarie River. The draft

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amendment identifies the land as the town of Ross as shown on the LIST Map. This extends the Colbeck Street/Portugal Street boundary southwards by up to approximately 810m incorporating all the Rural Living Zone east of the railway. This is considered preferable as it can be expected that single dwellings - and associated external lighting - will be developed in the Rural Living Zone. The expanded boundary also incorporates some Agriculture Zone land west of the railway. This is considered acceptable for the ease of describing the land using the LIST Map town of Ross.

Environmental qualities

Ross generates low levels of artificial lighting due to a small population of 410 people, low number of 236 dwellings (2021 census), no industrial or commercial development, no illuminated signs, no floodlit sports facilities.

The Ross LDC took readings at the (now shielded) streetlight at the southern end of Church Street, Ross. The darkest readings were better than the 21.2 mpsas required for dark sky accreditation (refer to 2026-03-16 Open Council – Ordinary Meeting Attachments p. 152 for details).

Economic qualities

The Ross LDC advises that:

- Tourism Tasmania reports a surge in visitors drawn by the Aurora Australis, nocturnal wildlife tours, and dark-sky experiences.
- Tasmania is positioning itself as a leader in nocturnal tourism, a trend focussed on night-time travel experiences.

Social qualities

The Ross LDC has demonstrated support from 9 Ross businesses.

Spatial qualities

The location of Ross distant from the artificial skyglow produced by Launceston and Hobart and setting within an open rural environment with low surrounding hills provides uninterrupted views of the horizon – spatial qualities that support the Dark Sky Specific Area Plan.

***(c) furthers the objectives set out in Schedule 1 of LUPAA***

| <b>Part 1 Objectives</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>Consideration</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>(a) to promote the sustainable development of natural and physical resources and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity</i> | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>(b) to provide for the fair, orderly and sustainable use and development of air, land and water</i>                                                | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <i>(c) to encourage public involvement in resource management and planning</i>                                                                        | The statutory process for the assessment of a planning scheme amendment includes public notification of the draft amendment. Any representations received must be considered by the Planning Authority. The Planning Authority is required to report on any representations to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, which may hold public hearings into representations. |
| <i>(d) to facilitate economic development in accordance with the objectives set out in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c)</i>                                | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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| <i>(e) to promote the sharing of responsibility for resource management and planning between the different spheres of Government, the community and industry in the State</i>                                          | Community, industry, and government agencies will have the opportunity to comment on the amendment during the public notification period.              |
| <b>Part 2 Objectives</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Consideration</b>                                                                                                                                   |
| <i>(a) to require sound strategic planning and co-ordinated action by State and local government</i>                                                                                                                   | The draft amendment is consistent with the relevant sections of the Northern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy, ensuring sound strategic planning.  |
| <i>(b) to establish a system of planning instruments to be the principal way of setting objectives, policies and controls for the use, development and protection of land</i>                                          | The Tasmanian Planning Scheme – Northern Midlands is the planning instrument relevant to the draft amendment.                                          |
| <i>(c) to ensure that the effects on the environment are considered and provide for explicit consideration of social and economic effects when decisions are made about the use and development of land</i>            | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                 |
| <i>(d) to require land use and development planning and policy to be easily integrated with environmental, social, economic, conservation and resource management policies at State, regional and municipal levels</i> | The draft amendment does not conflict with this objective.                                                                                             |
| <i>(e) to provide for the consolidation of approvals for land use or development and related matters, and to co-ordinate planning approvals with related approvals</i>                                                 | The draft amendment does not conflict with this objective.                                                                                             |
| <i>(f) to promote the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians and visitors to Tasmania by ensuring a pleasant, efficient and safe environment for working, living and recreation</i>                                    | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                 |
| <i>(g) to conserve those buildings, areas or other places which are of scientific, aesthetic, architectural or historical interest, or otherwise of special cultural value</i>                                         | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                 |
| <i>(h) to protect public infrastructure and other assets and enable the orderly provision and co-ordination of public utilities and other facilities for the benefit of the community</i>                              | The draft amendment is consistent with this objective.                                                                                                 |
| <i>(i) to provide a planning framework which fully considers land capability.</i>                                                                                                                                      | Land capability is considered through the State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2009 and the Agriculture Zone and Rural Zone provisions. |

***(d) is consistent with each State policy***

| <b>State Policy on the Protection of Agricultural Land 2009</b>                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>What is the purpose of the Policy?</b>                                                                                                                 | <b>What developments are affected?</b>                                                                                                                            | <b>Where does the Policy apply?</b>                                                                            |
| To conserve and protect agricultural land so that it remains available for the sustainable use and development of agriculture, recognising the particular | Proposed non-agricultural use and development that is 'discretionary' or 'prohibited' on land zoned either Significant Agriculture or Rural Resources in planning | All agricultural land in Tasmania zoned either Significant Agriculture or Rural Resources in planning schemes. |

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| importance of prime agricultural land.<br><br>'Agricultural use' includes use of the land for propagating, cultivating or harvesting plants or for keeping and breeding of animals, excluding domestic animals and pets. It includes the handling, packing or storing of agricultural produce for dispatch to processors or markets and controlled environment agriculture and plantation forestry.                                                                                                                                                                                       | schemes or land adjoining these zones but with a different zoning.                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>What is the purpose of the Policy?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>What developments are affected?</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>Where does the Policy apply?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| To achieve the sustainable management of Tasmania's surface water and groundwater resources by protecting or enhancing their qualities while allowing for sustainable development in accordance with the objectives of the RMPS.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Proposed use and development that may impact on surface or ground water quality in Tasmania.                                                               | <p>All surface waters, including coastal waters, and groundwaters, other than:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>privately owned waters that are not accessible to the public and are not connected to, or flow directly into, waters that are accessible to the public; or</li> <li>waters in any tank, pipe or cistern.</li> </ul> |
| <b>State Coastal Policy 1996</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>What is the purpose of the Policy?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>What developments are affected?</b>                                                                                                                     | <b>Where does the Policy apply?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| To protect the natural and cultural values of the coast, provide for sustainable use and development of the coast, and promote shared responsibility for its integrated management and protection.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Proposed use and development in a coastal area that is 'discretionary' or 'prohibited' under land use zones applying to coastal areas in planning schemes. | Tasmania's coastal area, including all islands except for Macquarie Island. The coastal zone includes State Waters (as defined in the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995) and all land to a distance of 1km from the high water mark.                                                                                                |
| <b>National Environmental Protection Measures (NEPMs)</b><br><br>In accordance with the State Policies and Projects Act 1993, a NEPM is taken to be a State Policy. The following NEPMs are therefore State policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Air Toxics</i></li> <li><i>Ambient Air Quality</i></li> <li><i>Assessment of Site Contamination</i></li> <li><i>Diesel Vehicle Emissions</i></li> <li><i>Movement of Controlled Waste between States and Territories</i></li> <li><i>National Pollutant Inventory</i></li> <li><i>Used Packaging Materials</i></li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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**Consideration:** The draft amendment is consistent with State policies as far as they are applicable.

**(da) satisfies the relevant criteria in relation to the TPPs**

**Consideration:** The Tasmanian Planning Policies (TPPs) come into effect on 1 July 2026.

**(e) as far as practicable, is consistent with the regional land use strategy, if any, for the regional area in which is situated the land to which the relevant planning instrument relates**

**Consideration:** The Northern Tasmanian Regional Land Use Strategy, 23 June 2021 (NTRLUS) is the applicable regional land use strategy for the Northern Midlands. The draft amendment is consistent with the following sections of the NTRLUS:

**B.1 Regional Overview**

**Economy**

*The region's sources of natural and competitive advantage underpin its economic prosperity. Northern Tasmania's distinct economic attributes are observed in the combination of the following.*

**Unique Natural Environment** *The region is recognised as having high environmental values and low levels of pollution that promote an association with 'purity' and 'quality' for many specialised manufacturing (food), agricultural and service industries (tourism).*

**B.2 Regional Opportunities**

*Tourism's focus on destination tourism has increased, particularly on the East Coast.*

**B.3 Regional Challenges**

*Tourism Growth and investment in tourism and recreation is currently focused in and around Launceston and in a limited number of other locations dispersed across the region. The challenge will be to expand this and capitalize on the excellent tourism potential of other, more remote locations. The region's role as the tourist gateway to Tasmania, via the airport and regional transport network will need continual reinforcement.*

**C.4.1 Goal 1: Economic Development**

**Strategic Direction G1.3**

*b) Support tourism, culture and arts by:*

- *Recognising the 'drivers' of tourism, including natural values, heritage, food and wine, and local character; and*
- *Providing for development of tourism products including accommodation.*

**(f) has regard to the strategic plan, prepared under section 66 of the Local Government Act 1993, that applies in relation to the land to which the relevant planning instrument relates**

**Consideration:** Council's Strategic Plan 2021-2027 is based upon four key priorities:

Lead: Serve with honesty, integrity, innovation and pride

Progress: Economic health and wealth – grow and prosper

People: Cultural and society – a vibrant future that respects the past

Place: Nurture our heritage environment

Each key priority has four strategic outcomes. Of most relevance to this draft amendment is strategic outcomes:

3.4 Towns are enviable places to visit, live and work

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4.1 Cherish and sustain our landscape

4.2 Meet environmental challenges

4.3 Eco-tourism strongly showcases our natural beauties

4.4 Our heritage villages and towns are high value assets

***(g) as far as practicable, is consistent with and coordinated with any LPSs that apply to municipal areas that are adjacent to the municipal area to which the relevant planning instrument relates***

**Consideration:** Adjacent municipal areas are: Meander Valley, City of Launceston, and Break O' Day (Northern Region), and Glamorgan-Spring Bay, Southern Midlands and Central Highlands (Southern Region). None of these municipalities have LPS which relate to dark sky. It is not practicable for the draft amendment to be consistent with the adjoining LPSs.

***(h) has regard to the safety requirements set out in the standards prescribed under the Gas Safety Act 2019***

**Consideration:** The site is not in the vicinity of the Tasmanian Gas Pipeline.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Dark Sky Certification - from 2024-10-21 Open Council Minutes
- NMC Dark Sky Policy and Support of Ross as a Dark Sky Community from 2026-03-16 Open Council Meeting Minutes Amended



## 7.4 ROSS DISTRICT COMMITTEE

At the ordinary meetings of the Ross Local District Committee held on 3 September 2024 and 1 October 2024 the following motions were recorded for Council's consideration:

### 7.4.1 Ross Bike Rack - Location

#### MINUTE NO. 24/0345

##### DECISION

Cr McCullagh/Deputy Mayor Lambert

That Council notes the committee's recommendation and assesses the viability of the location.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

##### **Officer Recommendation:**

That Council notes the committee's recommendation and assesses the viability of the location.

##### **Committee Recommendation:**

That Council install the second location for the new bike racks to be at the Bridge Street Playground at the entrance area to the pool and use a green finish to the concrete slab to help it blend more harmoniously with the surroundings and have a more visually appealing and subtle appearance.

##### **Officer Comment:**

Officer will review the finish to the concrete slab.

### 7.4.2 Dark Sky Certification

#### MINUTE NO. 24/0346

##### DECISION

Cr Andrews/Deputy Mayor Lambert

That council supports Ross Township's bid to be a Dark Sky Community.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

##### **Officer Recommendation:**

That council supports Ross Township's bid to be a Dark Sky Community.



**Committee Recommendation:**

That Council supports Ross Township's application for DarkSky Certification as the 5<sup>th</sup> location in Australia due to Ross' unique position of a dark night sky and unrestricted horizons and request to formally ask TasNetworks to install a shade/cap on the light pole of Church Street to block out light on the Southern and Western sides.

**Officer Comment:**

Letter of support can be written to TasNetworks to request capping of the streetlight to minimise light pollution.

**Background:** *The area at Church Street is ranked at level 1 for a dark sky. The Ross township is considered a level 2 rating. The committee seeks to apply for certification to be listed as a Dark Sky Place. The International **DarkSky** Places Program is a conservation-based program rooted in grassroots advocacy to protect **dark skies** and the nocturnal environment. The DarkSky Approved program provides objective, third-party certification for lighting products, lighting designs, and installed lighting projects that minimize glare, reduce light trespass, and reduce light pollution. To be certified, they must: Restrict the amount of upward-directed light. **A Dark Sky Community is a town, city, municipality that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of a quality outdoor lighting ordinance, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies.** Stargazing enthusiasts journey to Tasmania to be mesmerised by dark skies and constellations. Renowned as a haven for nature lovers with its pristine landscapes, remote wilderness areas, and minimal light pollution.*

*President of Dark Skies Tasmania, Landon Bannister, says the rise of astro-tourism happened organically. He sees it as part of a broader shift toward reconnecting with nature. "It's really important to embrace darkness. One of the most beautiful things about stargazing is to just take the time to let your eyes dark adapt. We spend so much time under artificial light now."*

*The desire to see stars benefits rural communities. Urban billboards, car parks and multi-story office buildings lit up throughout the night are some of the biggest sources of light pollution.*

*Bannister says you have to drive around three hours from cities like Melbourne and Sydney to see the Milky Way – and even further from cities in the US and Europe. **But in places like New Zealand and Tasmania, you only need to drive 30 minutes out of town to see the drifts of light that give the Milky Way its name.***

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### 7.4.3 Disability Parking

**MINUTE NO. 24/0347**

DECISION

Cr Adams/Cr Andrews

That Officers assess providing a disability car park and recommend appropriate location.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

**Officer Recommendation:**

That Officers assess providing a disability car park and recommend appropriate location.

**Committee Recommendation:**

Committee recommends that a disabled parking bay be marked out at Bridge Street adjacent to the clinic with disability access to alight from both left- and right-hand sides of the car.

**Officer Comment:**

Bridge Street location is not able to comply with parking standards. Other possible locations will be investigated.



## 16 WORKS REPORTS

### 16.1 NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL DARK SKY POLICY AND SUPPORT OF ROSS AS A DARK SKY COMMUNITY

*Responsible Officer:* Maree Bricknell, Acting General Manager

*Report prepared by:* Samuel Goss, Trainee Engineering Officer

*Mayor Knowles reconvened the meeting after the meal break at approximately 7.15pm and Council commenced with Item 16.1.*

#### MINUTE NO. 26/088

##### DECISION

Cr McCullagh/Cr Terrett

That Council

- a) Support in-principle the Dark Sky Lighting Policy as presented and implementation of the program so long as it aligns with national regulatory standards.
- and
- b) Seek external funding for the implementation of the Dark Sky Program to support accreditation as a recognised Dark Sky Community.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

##### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council

- a) Support in-principle the Dark Sky Lighting Policy as presented and implementation of the program so long as it aligns with national regulatory standards.
- and
- b) Seek external funding for the implementation of the Dark Sky Program to support accreditation as a recognised Dark Sky Community.

## 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's in-principle- support for the proposed Dark Sky Lighting Policy and the implementation of the Dark Sky Community Program for Ross, subject to alignment with national regulatory standards.

The report also seeks Council endorsement to pursue external funding opportunities to further support the accreditation to become a recognised Dark Sky Community.

## 2 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The Ross Local District Committee (LDC) is applying to Dark Sky International for accreditation as a Dark Sky Community. This designation recognises places with exceptionally dark night skies that are protected through the adoption of a dark sky-compliant lighting policy.



There are currently forty-three accredited Dark Sky Communities worldwide. If successful, Ross would become only the third Dark Sky Community in Australia and only Dark Sky Community in Tasmania.

Accreditation would establish Ross as a destination of national and international significance for night sky viewing. Astro-tourism is a growing global trend, and this initiative would position Ross at the forefront of this movement, while complementing the town's existing attractions, including its tree-lined streetscape, colonial architecture and rich history.

The village of Ross is increasingly recognised for the exceptional quality of its night sky, making it well suited to astronomical observation and astrotourism. Its geographic location, low levels of artificial lighting, favourable climate and strong community engagement combine to create highly favourable dark sky conditions.

### **Geographic Setting and Low Light Pollution**

Ross is located in the central Tasmanian Midlands, distant from major urban centres and associated light pollution. The village has a population of approximately 400 people and no industrial or commercial development, resulting in minimal artificial lighting.

The main streets of Ross are lined with mature elm, oak and ash trees forming dense canopies that significantly reduce upward light spill and reflection. The surrounding landscape consists primarily of grazing land and dispersed farmsteads, contributing negligible skyglow. This exceptionally low background light is a key factor supporting high quality night sky viewing.

Ross is situated approximately midway between the light domes of Launceston and Hobart, and benefits from distance and terrain that further limit external light spill.

### **Sky Visibility and Atmospheric Conditions**

While Tasmania is widely recognised for dark skies, many areas are forested or mountainous. Ross lies on open plains, providing wide horizons and unobstructed views of the night sky. This makes it particularly suitable for observing celestial events such as meteor showers, planetary conjunctions and the Milky Way.

The Midlands climate is typically dry and cool, particularly in winter and spring, which are optimal seasons for astronomical observation. The area experiences frequent clear nights and lower cloud cover than Tasmania's western and southern regions. Ross also lies in a rain shadow, resulting in relatively low rainfall (average annual rainfall of 546.3 mm between 2020–2024), stable atmospheric conditions and excellent air quality.

### **Astronomical and Community Potential**

Although Ross does not currently host a formal observatory, the recently formed Ross Astronomical Society reflects growing local interest and capability. The town's sky quality and location provide strong opportunities for amateur astronomy, astrophotography and dark sky tourism.

Ross offers clear visibility of key southern hemisphere features, including the Southern Cross, Centaurus, Carina, the Magellanic Clouds and, during periods of heightened solar activity, the Aurora Australis. Local tourism operators are exploring dark sky-themed experiences that complement Ross's heritage attractions, supporting the development of a distinctive astrotourism offering.



### **Aurora Viewing Potential**

Ross's latitude (42°S), low light pollution and unobstructed southern views make it well suited for aurora viewing during favourable geomagnetic conditions. This potential is well documented through local astrophotography and publications, highlighting Ross as an accessible and attractive location for aurora observation.

### **Monitoring and Data Collection**

Prior to submitting the Dark Sky Community pre-application, night sky brightness was monitored using a Sky Quality Meter. Measurements taken in late 2024 and early 2025 recorded readings exceeding the Dark Sky International accreditation threshold of 21.2 mag/arcsec<sup>2</sup>, confirming the high quality of Ross's night sky. Readings were submitted to the Globe at Night database to support the application.

### **Outdoor Lighting Context**

Outdoor lighting in Ross falls into three categories: street lighting, external lighting on public buildings, and floodlighting of historic monuments. There is minimal illuminated signage or sports ground lighting.

There are 53 streetlights within Ross, maintained by TasNetworks on behalf of Northern Midlands Council. While high pressure sodium luminaires currently used in key heritage areas meet Dark Sky requirements, these are progressively being replaced with higher temperature LED lighting. This presents a risk to the heritage nighttime streetscape and dark sky values, which the proposed lighting policy seeks to address. Community support for retaining compliant lighting is strong.

Plans will be developed to progressively upgrade lighting on public buildings, businesses and monuments to ensure compliance with the Dark Sky Lighting Policy following accreditation.

Dark skies are essential for both human health and biodiversity. They support natural sleep patterns and promote wellbeing and connection to nature for people, while also playing a critical role in the survival of nocturnal insects and wildlife. Light pollution disrupts these natural rhythms, with adverse impacts on ecosystems and human health.

The proposed Dark Sky Community accreditation:

- Aligns with multiple Council strategies and policies
- Has strong support from the Ross community, as well as a range of organisations and individuals
- Has received coverage in several media outlets
- Is underpinned by a five year plan developed by the proponents to maximise economic and tourism benefits for Ross
- Has been fully funded by the proponents, who have raised the \$450 application fee, prepared the application to Dark Sky International, and purchased a \$250 Sky Quality Meter to support an ongoing data collection program

To achieve accreditation, Council is required to adopt a dark sky-compliant lighting policy. To support this:

- The proponents have prepared a lighting policy that meets Dark Sky International requirements and complies with AS1158
- All streetlights and publicly owned lighting in Ross have been mapped, with required lighting changes identified
- Upon accreditation, Ross will have a five-year implementation period to fully comply with the lighting policy



Several Australian local governments have already adopted Dark Sky–compliant lighting policies, including Yankalilla Council in South Australia and the Shires of Carnamah and Wonga Ballidu in Western Australia.

Within Tasmania, a number of councils are currently exploring formal participation in the Dark Sky network. Ross is well advanced in this regard, having already developed a compliant lighting policy and progressed an accreditation application.

Maintaining this momentum will ensure Ross remains at the forefront of Dark Sky initiatives in Tasmania and nationally.

### **3 STRATEGIC PLAN & INTEGRATED PRIORITY PROJECTS PLAN**

#### **3.1 Strategic Plan 2021-2027**

The Strategic Plan 2021-2027 provides the guidelines within which Council operates.

**Lead: Serve with honesty, integrity, innovation and pride**

**Leaders with Impact**

**Strategic outcomes:**

1.1 Council is connected to the community

**People: Culture and society - a vibrant future that respects the past**

**Sense of Place - Sustain, Protect, Progress**

**Strategic outcomes:**

3.3 Public assets meet future lifestyle challenges

**Place: Nurture our heritage environment**

**Environment - Cherish, Sustain our Landscapes and Preserve, Protect Our Built Heritage for Tomorrow**

**Strategic outcomes:**

4.2 Meet environmental challenges

#### **3.2 Integrated Priority Projects Plan 2021**

This plan has been developed with a coordinated perspective to align with local, regional, state and federal plans. Rather than grouping projects by town or assembling a long list of 'nice to have' projects, this plan takes a Council-wide view of needs and opportunities in relation to the strategic investment drivers in the region. This matter has relevance to:

Not applicable.

### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

### **5 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

N/A

### **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**



There are minimal immediate financial implications for Council arising from providing in-principle support for the Dark Sky lighting Policy. The application fee, policy preparation, and initial data collection costs have been met by the proponents. Any future costs associated with implementing the Dark Sky Community Program, including potential lighting upgrades, would be staged over a five-year period following accreditation and would be subject to Council consideration through normal budget and capital works processes. Council's financial exposure is further mitigated by the intention to seek external grant funding to support implementation, thereby reducing reliance on Council-funded resources.

## **7 RISK ISSUES**

The primary risks associated with supporting the Dark Sky lighting Policy relate to regulatory compliance, financial exposure, and implementation capacity. These risks are mitigated by the policy's requirement to align with national regulatory standards, including AS1158, and by Council providing only in-principle support at this stage. Financial risk to Council is limited, as accreditation and initial preparatory costs have been met by the proponents, and implementation funding would be sought through external sources. There is also a manageable reputational risk should accreditation not be achieved or ongoing compliance not be maintained; however, this is reduced through the proposed staged implementation period, clear governance arrangements, and community support for the initiative.

## **8 CONSULTATION WITH STATE GOVERNMENT**

Formal consultation with the Tasmanian State Government has not been required at this stage of the Dark Sky Community application. The proposal is community-led and does not trigger statutory State approvals. Notwithstanding this, the initiative aligns with broader State-level discussions being progressed through the Local Government Association of Tasmania regarding Dark Sky planning guidance. Should accreditation be achieved, and where implementation intersects with State-owned assets, heritage considerations or regulatory frameworks, appropriate consultation with relevant State agencies would be undertaken as required.

## **9 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

The Dark Sky lighting proposal has strong support from the Ross community, demonstrated through the active involvement of the Ross Local District Committee and the contribution of local organisations and individuals. The initiative has been community-led, with proponents undertaking significant preparatory work, including policy development, data collection, and public advocacy. Media coverage and ongoing engagement have further raised community awareness and support for the project. This level of local commitment indicates a high degree of community ownership and provides a strong foundation for successful implementation and long-term compliance should accreditation be achieved. The committee have committed to continuing to engage with the community and business community throughout the future steps of the program.

## **10 OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER**

That Council:

1. Provide in-principle support for the proposed Dark Sky lighting Policy and the implementation of the Dark Sky Community Program for Ross, subject to alignment with national regulatory standards; and
2. Endorse the pursuit of external funding for the implementation of the Dark Sky Program to support accreditation as a recognised Dark Sky Community.

## **11 OFFICER'S COMMENTS/CONCLUSION**

The Ross community has demonstrated strong enthusiasm and commitment to reducing light pollution, improving human and environmental health, minimising energy use, and celebrating the town's night skies.

Accreditation as a Dark Sky Community would formalise this commitment and align Ross with the objectives of Dark Sky International. Council and the community would commit to working collaboratively to achieve the goals of the Dark Sky



Community Program, support Dark Sky International campaigns and initiatives, assist emerging Dark Sky communities, and provide annual updates to Dark Sky International as required.

This initiative presents an opportunity for Ross to demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship, community wellbeing and sustainable tourism, while protecting a valued natural asset for current and future generations.

## **12 ATTACHMENTS**

1. Dark Sky Policy [**16.1.1** - 4 pages]
  2. Ross Dark Sky Community Council Brief [**16.1.2** - 40 pages]
  3. International Dark- Sky Community Program Guidelines 2018 [**16.1.3** - 14 pages]
  4. The Dark Sky project - presentation to NMC [**16.1.4** - 6 pages]
-

## DARK SKY LIGHTING POLICY

**Originated Date:** Adopted xxxxxx – Min. No: xxx/xxx

**Amended Date/s:**

**Applicable** *Local Government Act (1993)*

**Legislation:** *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA)*

*Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995*

**Objective** The objective of this policy is to ensure that nominated Dark Sky Communities:

- i. Are supported by Council, government agencies and private landholders in achieving, maintaining and promoting International Dark Sky Community accreditation.
- ii. Ensure all new public lighting complies with Dark Sky International standards.
- iii. Progressively retrofit existing public lighting to meet Dark Sky International standards.
- iv. Establishes the enforceable lighting management framework required under the Dark Sky International Dark Sky Community Program and
- v. Supports ongoing compliance with accreditation requirements.

**Administration:** Works & Infrastructure

**Review Cycle/Date:** Every 4 years. Next review March 2030.

### 1. SCOPE

This policy shall only apply to nominated dark sky communities as decided in a council meeting, while actively seeking or where accreditation has been gained from the International Dark Sky Association as an International Dark Sky Community.

Communities can be added or removed from being included in the Dark Sky policy through council passing a resolution to add or remove a proposed town.

This policy shall apply to all public lighting and all private outdoor lighting within the legal boundary of any designated Dark Sky Community.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, certain words, phrases and terms used herein shall have the meanings assigned to them by this section:

- **Correlated Colour Temperature (CCT):** A specification of the colour appearance of the light emitted by a lamp, relating its colour to the colour of light from a reference source when heated to a particular temperature, measured in degrees kelvin (K).
- **Direct Illumination:** Illumination resulting from light emitted directly from a lamp, luminary or reflector. This does not include light reflected from other surfaces, such as the ground or building faces.
- **International Dark Sky Community:** An International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) is a town, city, municipality or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal dark skies.
- **Floodlight:** A fixture or lamp designed to flood an area with light. A specific form of lamp or fixture designed to direct its output in a specific direction. Such lamps are often designated by the manufacturer and are commonly used in residential outdoor lighting. These lights must not emit light above the 45-degree plane, must not exceed 1,000 lumens and must be fitted with timers.
- **Fully Shielded:** An outdoor light fixture designed so that the installed fixture emits 0.0% uplight (U0) above the horizontal plane of the lowest part of the fixture. These light fixtures must be shielded in and of themselves.

Surrounding structures, like canopies, are not to be considered when determining if the fixture is fully cut off. Fully Shielded fixtures must be appropriately mounted so that the shielding prevents light from escaping above the horizontal and all light is directed downward.

- **Light Pollution:** Any adverse effect of non-natural light sources. Often used to denote sky glow from cities or towns, but also includes glare, light trespass, visual clutter and other adverse effects of lighting.
- **Light Source:** The part of a lighting fixture that produces light, e.g. the bulb.
- **Light Trespass:** Light falling where it is not wanted or needed. Spill light falling over property lines that illuminate adjacent grounds or buildings in an objectionable manner.
- **Luminaire:** A complete electric light unit.
- **Outdoor Light Fitting:** An outdoor electrically powered illuminating lamp or similar device used for lighting structures, parking lots, pathways, service canopies, recreational areas, signs or other similar outdoor lighting uses.
- **Recreational Lighting:** Lighting used to illuminate sports fields, ball courts, playgrounds or similar outdoor recreational facilities.
- **Spotlight:** A fixture or lamp designed to light a small area very brightly. See definition of Floodlight.
- **Unshielded Fixture:** A fixture that allows light to be emitted above the horizontal either directly from the lamp or indirectly from the fixture or reflector. Any fixture not fully cut off.
- **Curfew:** A defined time period during which certain categories of outdoor lighting must be extinguished or reduced in output to comply with Dark Sky requirements.
- **Maximum Light Output (Lumen Limit):** The maximum permitted initial lumen output from an outdoor luminaire as installed.

### 3. OBJECTIVE

The Northern Midlands Council recognises the uniqueness and opportunities available to communities within the LGA to seek recognition in the form of accreditation as an International Dark Sky Community. Given the opportunities for various communities to seek this recognition and the complex tenure arrangements (possibility of many hundreds of privately owned parcels of land) within these areas, lighting management shall be delivered through two streams:

- i. Public Lighting Infrastructure: being lighting infrastructure owned/managed by Council, government bodies and/or other service authorities for the purpose of lighting public spaces and infrastructure.
- ii. Private Infrastructure: focusing on community education, with private landowners being encouraged to upgrade existing external lights to be compliant with the International Dark Sky standards for International Dark Sky Communities.

### 4. NEW PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Lighting shall be 'Dark Sky Friendly' by considering the following principles:

- i. Outdoor public lighting must only be installed when deemed necessary and must only be activated when needed.
- ii. The intensity of outdoor lighting must be appropriate for its intended use.
- iii. All outdoor public lighting installed by Council shall be fully shielded (0% uplight, backlight, uplight and glare (BUG) rating U0) and shall have a correlated colour temperature not exceeding 3000K, with a preference for 2200K.
- iv. Maximum initial lumen output per fixture shall not exceed limits specified under Dark Sky International guidelines unless specifically exempted.

### 5. PUBLIC STREET LIGHTING

- i. The Northern Midlands Council specifies the lowest lighting level category, as indicated in current

Australian Standards, to keep the lighting level (and tariff costs) as low as possible; whilst recognising Council's obligations around Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

- ii. Installation of all new public street lighting will be to the minimum specifications in accordance with current Australian Standards and utilising standard TasNetworks luminaires which meet colour temperature requirements under International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)
- iii. All street lighting shall utilise luminaires with an uplight rating of U0 and backlight/ glare values meeting BUG limits appropriate to their location.
- iv. Where TasNetworks does not offer compliant luminaires, Council shall not approve installation of non-compliant units and shall continue operating existing lighting until compliant luminaires become available.
- v. For all new street lighting installations shielding and/or aero screen fittings shall be utilised as standard.
- vi. Layout for new street lighting shall be prepared by a suitably qualified lighting engineer, ensuring that lighting is minimised while still maintaining minimum standards required under Australian Standards.

#### **6. PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT**

- i. All private outdoor lighting shall be fully shielded unless the fixture emits fewer than 600 lumens, in which case partially shielded fixtures may be permitted.
- ii. All lighting must be extinguished no later than 10pm unless required for safety or active use.
- iii. Lighting plans must be prepared and provided for any new Development Applications that will lead to the development of new external lighting (public or private), this includes land division applications which require street lighting and commercial or residential developments where lighting is proposed (for example, in car park areas, or around buildings). Outdoor lighting plans shall be assessed against lighting principles in the 'International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)', as well as relevant industry and Australian Standards. To the extent that this Policy can require, those costs are to be borne by the developer.
- iv. Any private building application which proposes building a structure which has a footprint over 12m<sup>2</sup> and is proposed to be built inside a dark sky community must pay a Dark Sky Compliance Contribution if approved. The fee shall be transferred into a budget whose sole use will be to upgrade the existing infrastructure in dark sky communities to be compliant with the dark sky policy, unless given written consent by the GM to use the funds for other purposes.

#### **7. EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE**

- v. Non-compliant public lighting within a designated Dark Sky Community shall be replaced or retrofitted within 5 years of the date of designation, or sooner where practicable.
- vi. Council recognises that existing luminaires and public lighting infrastructure may not meet the requirements for lighting under the 'International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)'. In these cases, Council will work with communities seeking Dark Sky accreditation to prepare a lighting replacement plan to ensure public lighting conforms with Dark Sky Standards (as well as current Australian Standards).
- vii. These works are to be funded or co-funded by the relevant community interest group who puts forward the request / application for accreditation.
- viii. The Northern Midlands Council commits to ensuring Dark Sky appropriate lighting will be designed and located accordingly when renewing or upgrading Council owned lighting within an area which has sought (or has received) accreditation.

**8. OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL AND/OR ATHLETIC FIELD LIGHTING**

To the extent to which this can be controlled through Legislation, Regulation or through Council's own projects, Outdoor Recreational and/or Athletic Field Lighting may be exempted from the strict shielding and short-wavelength emission requirements above provided all the following conditions are met:

- i. Lighting to conform to AS 2560.2:2021 Sports lighting, Part 2: Specific Applications, and AS/NZS 4282:2023 Control of the obtrusive effects of outdoor lighting.
- ii. Illuminance levels must be adjustable based on the task (e.g. active play vs. field maintenance).
- iii. A curfew requirement (e.g. lights must be extinguished by 10pm/2200h or one hour after the end of play, whichever is the later) is observed.
- iv. Timers to be installed to prevent lights being left on accidentally overnight by automatically extinguishing them.
- v. All sports lighting installations must utilise luminaires with zero uplight (U0).

**9. ILLUMINATED SIGNS**

Restrictions on the installation and operation of illuminated signs:

- i. Luminance of externally or internally illuminated signs shall not exceed 150 cd/m<sup>2</sup> at night.
- ii. All signs shall be extinguished no later than 10pm or the close of business, whichever is earlier.
- iii. The luminous/illuminated surface area of an individual sign shall not exceed 18.6 square metres

**10. RESTRICTED LIGHTING**

- i. Lighting with a correlated colour temperature above 3000K is prohibited within Dark Sky Communities.
- ii. To the extent to which this can be controlled through Legislation, Regulation, or through Council's own projects, the following lighting is to be restricted or prohibited within areas covered under this policy, unless a motion is passed through council allowing such
- iii. The use of searchlights, except when used by emergency personnel.
- iv. Lighting on advertisement signage is prohibited, except where this meets the above requirements.

**11. REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed every four years or more frequently, if dictated by operational demands or legislative changes.

# Accreditation of Ross as a Dark Sky Community

Brief to Northern Midlands Council  
to support the accreditation of Ross through  
the adoption of a dark sky compliant lighting policy

Ross Local District Committee

Date: Wednesday, 18 February 2026

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## Executive Summary

The Ross LDC is applying to Dark Sky International to become a Dark Sky Community – a place where the night skies are truly dark and there is a dark sky compliant lighting policy to ensure the skies remain dark. There are forty-three Dark Sky Communities worldwide. Ross is applying to become only the second Dark Sky Community in Australia.

Recognition as a Dark Sky Community will give Ross a national and international reputation as a place to visit to view the night skies. Astro-tourism is already an international trend. This initiative will place Ross at the forefront of this trend and complement the town's existing attractions – the tree-lined streetscape, colonial architecture and history.

Dark skies are crucial for both human health and biodiversity. They support natural sleep patterns and a connection to nature for people, while also playing a vital role in the survival and thriving of countless nocturnal species, including insects and wildlife. Light pollution disrupts these natural rhythms, negatively impacting ecosystems and human well-being.

- Accreditation of Ross as a Dark Sky Community aligns with several Council strategies and policies
- The Dark Sky Community proposal is supported by the Ross community and many organisations and individuals
- The proposal has featured in several media articles
- The proponents have developed a 5-year plan to maximise the economic benefits of accreditation to Ross
- The proponents have raised the \$450 application fee, written the application to Dark Sky International and purchased a \$250 Sky Quality Meter for a data collection program

To achieve accreditation, a dark sky compliant lighting policy needs to be adopted by Council:

- The proponents have written a lighting policy that is dark sky compliant and meets AS1158
- To assist in implementation, the proponents have mapped the streetlights and publicly owned lighting in Ross and documented the changes required to lighting
- Upon accreditation, Ross will have 5 years to implement the lighting policy

## Alignment with Council Strategies and Policies

Accreditation of Ross as a Dark Sky Community aligns with the objectives of the following Council strategies and policies:

### Strategies

#### Economic Development Strategy 2024

- 1.5 Preserves the cultural heritage and characteristics of each town
- 1.6 Progressively implements the urban design / placemaking plans
- 1.10 Supports existing visitor-attraction events and the development of new events

#### Arts and Culture Strategy 2024

- 1.1 Ensures consideration and inclusion of cultural and creative activities in planning strategies
- 1.4 Invests in and supports existing art, culture and heritage-based visitor attraction events and the development of new events

#### Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024

- 1.2 Invests in, manages and renews community infrastructure to ensure community health and wellbeing needs are met into the future

### Policies

Festivals, Events and Promotions, 13 March 2000 (reviewed 20 January 2025):

- Increase the well-being of residents
- Attract economic benefits through growth in the number and length of stay of visitors
- Promote the establishment of industry related business activity and employment opportunities for residents

Heritage Incentive Scheme, 26 September 2001 (amended 17 February 2025)

- To provide an incentive to improve the streetscape views of properties that are in heritage precincts

Assistance to Community, Sporting and Non-Profit Organisations, 25 July 1994, (amended 13 December 2021):

- To establish a policy relating to the allocation of assistance to community organisations towards special or capital works for the improvement / benefit of Council owned assets

### Other Councils

Compliant Dark Sky Lighting Policies have been adopted by Yankalilla in South Australia and Carnamah and Wongan-Ballidu in Western Australia.

Other councils in Tasmania are examining formal inclusion in the Dark Sky network.

Ross is well ahead of the game at the moment. Let's keep it that way!

## Economic Potential

### Dark Sky and Astrotourism Statistics

#### Western Australia

- 89% of interstate and intrastate visitors show moderate to high interest in stargazing and dark sky experiences.
- The 2023 total solar eclipse in Exmouth attracted over 15,000 visitors, with minimal environmental impact due to ecologically conscious tourists.
- Towns like Gascoyne Junction host regular stargazing events, drawing up to 30,000 annual visitors including hikers, grey nomads, and international tourists.
- First Nations-led tours have seen a 500% increase in bookings post-eclipse.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### Tasmania

- Tourism Tasmania reports a surge in visitors drawn by the Aurora Australis, nocturnal wildlife tours, and dark-sky experiences.
- The Dark Mofo festival attracts around 50,000 visitors, prompting airlines like Qantas to add extra flights.
- Tasmania is positioning itself as a leader in noctourism, a trend focused on night-time travel experiences.<sup>[2]</sup>

#### New South Wales

- Vivid Sydney, one of the world's largest light festivals, draws over 2.5 million visitors and generates \\$180 million in economic activity annually.
- The Glow event at Sydney Zoo expects 100,000 visitors, contributing \\$20 million to the local economy.<sup>[2]</sup>

### Noctourism: A Growing Trend

- A global survey of 27,000 travellers identified noctourism as a top travel trend for 2025.
- Night-time experiences such as stargazing, auroras, bioluminescence, and light shows are increasingly popular.
- Travellers seek immersive, awe-inspiring experiences that connect them with nature and culture after dark.<sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Dark sky tourism displays astronomical potential | Austrade](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Rise in after-dark travel drives tourism surge across Australia](#)

## Passage of Dark Sky Accreditation by Council

The following motion was carried unanimously by the Ross Local District Committee at the meeting of 1 October 2024.

### 8.4 DarkSky Place International Certification

**MOTION:** Moved N. Davies Seconded: M Smith Carried Unanimously  
That council supports Ross Township's application for DarkSky Certification as the 5<sup>th</sup> location in Australia due to Ross's unique position of a dark night sky and unrestricted horizons and request to formally ask TasNetworks to install a shade on the light pole of Church Street to block out light on the Southern and Western sides.

*Ross District Committee*

3 | Page

At the Council meeting of 21 October 2024, Northern Midlands Council unanimously passed a motion supporting the application by Ross Local District Committee to apply for accreditation as a Dark Sky Community.

### 7.4.2 Dark Sky Certification

MINUTE NO. 24/0346

#### DECISION

Cr Andrews/Deputy Mayor Lambert  
That council supports Ross Township's bid to be a Dark Sky Community.

Carried Unanimously

Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

#### Officer Recommendation:

That council supports Ross Township's bid to be a Dark Sky Community.

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NORTHERN  
MIDLANDS  
COUNCIL

2024-10-21 Open Council - Ordinary Meeting - Minutes

## Letters of Support

Letter of support from Mayor Mary Knowles.



NORTHERN  
MIDLANDS  
COUNCIL

29 October 2024

TasNetworks  
Via email: Councils@tasnetworks.com.au

Dear TasNetworks Team,

Re: Request for Support – Dark Sky Community Certification for Ross Township

On behalf of the Northern Midlands Council and the Ross community, I am writing to formally request your support for Ross Township's application for Dark Sky certification as an International Dark Sky Community. This certification recognizes communities that have demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving the night sky through responsible outdoor lighting practices and dark sky education. Ross's unique position, with its dark night skies and unobstructed horizons, offers an exceptional opportunity to promote astro-tourism and encourage stargazing enthusiasts to visit our region. The International Dark Sky Places (IDSP) program certifies communities, parks, and protected areas around the world that preserve and protect dark sites through responsible lighting policies and public education.

A Dark Sky Community is a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of a quality outdoor lighting ordinance, dark sky education, and citizen support of dark skies.

Dark Sky Communities excel in their efforts to promote responsible lighting and dark sky stewardship and set good examples for surrounding communities.

To support this initiative, we kindly request TasNetworks' assistance in mitigating light pollution in Ross by installing a shade or cap on light pole #347381 located on Church Street. Specifically, we ask that the cap restrict light spill on the south and west sides, thereby reducing unnecessary sideways light and preserving the integrity of Ross's night skies.

This modification would greatly aid our efforts to achieve Dark Sky certification and reinforce the community's commitment to preserving our beautiful night skies for future generations.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your positive response.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Knowles OAM  
Mayor, Northern Midlands Council

P.O. Box 156  
Longford Tas 7301  
Telephone (03) 6397 7303  
Facsimile (03) 6397 7331  
[www.northernmidlands.tas.gov.au](http://www.northernmidlands.tas.gov.au)

Tasmania's Historic Heart

Letter of nomination from Dark Sky International member Landon Bannister.



Northern Midlands Council  
13 Smith Street  
Longford, Tasmania 7301  
26/11/2024

**Re: Request for Support – Dark Sky Community for Ross Township**

Dark Sky Tasmania, a chapter of DarkSky International, is fully in support of the Ross Local District Committee and the Northern Midlands Councils push for a Dark Sky Community in the township of Ross.

Dark Sky Tasmania has been well aware of Ross as a destination for those seeking dark skies for a long time, both formally and informally. Ross is also well known as a hot spot for Aurora Australis chasers, as highlighted by the recent publication of the guide 'Ross by Night: Night Sky and Aurora Photography'.

Ross' location in the central east of Tasmania places it in a strong position to maintain its pristine skies, being substantial distance from any major city. The community and council has also demonstrated a history of proactive behaviour in dark sky preservation.

We wish Ross Local District Committee and the Northern Midlands Council the best in this exciting endeavour, and are more than willing to assist in any way that we can

Yours Sincerely,

Landon Bannister  
President, Dark Sky Tasmania

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Landon Bannister".

[president@darkskytas.org](mailto:president@darkskytas.org)

Address|34 Federal St | Hobart| Tasmania|7000  
Email| [info@darkskytasmania.org](mailto:info@darkskytasmania.org) Web|[darkskytasmania.org](http://darkskytasmania.org)

## Letter of Support for Dark Sky Community Accreditation

Jessica Newton  
Tasmanian Wool Centre  
48 Church St  
Ross TAS 7209

11 July 2025

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the application of Ross to become an accredited Dark Sky Community. I agree with the committee, that Astrotourism will bring economic and educational advantages. Ross stands poised to benefit from this, with local businesses, restaurants, and hospitality providers eager to welcome stargazers, amateur astronomers, and nature enthusiasts. Community events will not only draw visitors but also instil a sense of pride and ownership among residents.

As a not-for-profit Museum and retail space, the Tasmanian Wool Centre exists in order to maintain local buildings and items of historic significance and to tell the story of the wool industry in the midlands. Our clientele is heavily tourist based, and we welcome the potential visitors this accreditation will bring to the area.

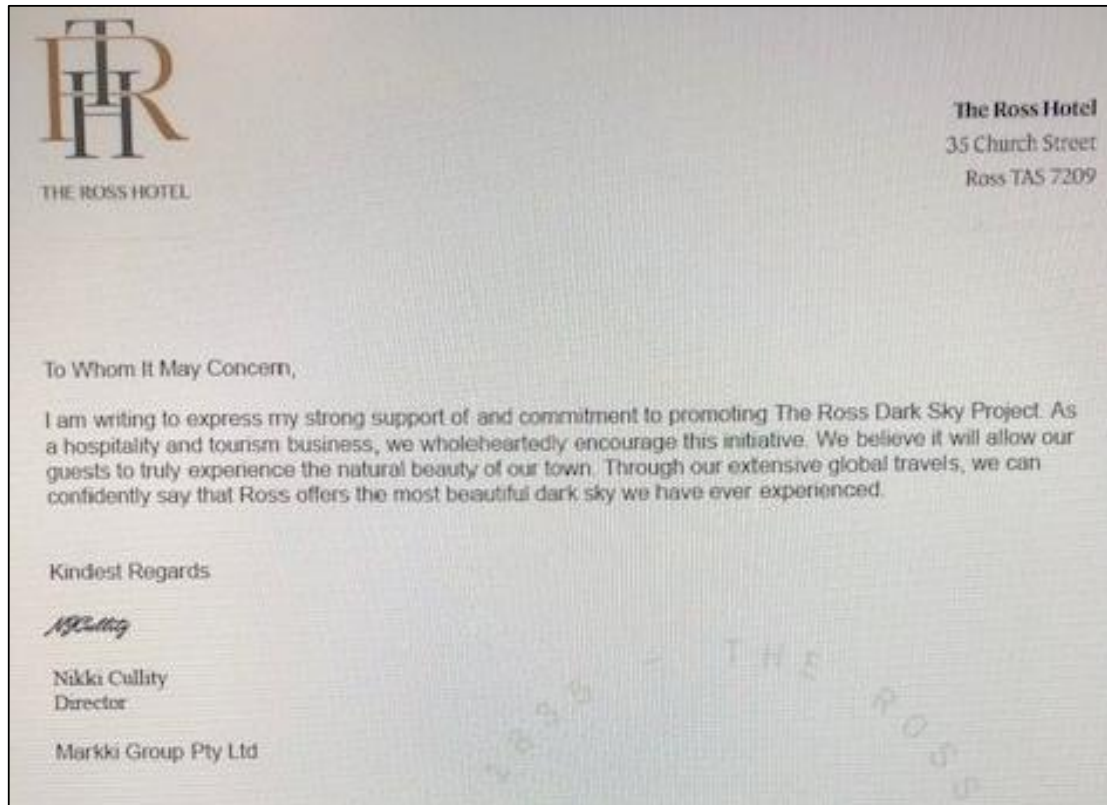
I am confident that with continued collaboration, innovation, and passion, our community will not only meet but exceed the standards set forth by the International Dark-Sky Association.

I look forward to celebrating our shared success under a sky full of stars.

With much appreciation,



Jessica Newton  
Manager  
Tasmanian Wool Centre, Ross



Riverview at Ross  
2 High St  
Ross TAS 7209

**To the Northern Midlands Council**

I have been the Manager of Riverview at Ross (motel) for the past three years and also the Ross Caravan Park since 2025.

During this time, I have seen the value that Dark Sky Tourism would bring to Ross and the surrounding Midlands area. Many of our guests are avid Aurora chasers and photographers and we are often asked about the Aurora, and the best location in Ross to see it.

We are currently collaborating with an astrophotographer to hold four weekend photography courses in Ross over the next year, the first one being in October 2025.

In the future we would like to organise nightly Aurora and Dark Sky tours so that any visitors staying in town would be able to have a dark skies experience during their stay. For this to be a possibility we need more attention given to the value of such an experience in Ross and increase visitors to the area year-round, which is where the Dark Sky Community application would be of great value if accepted.

We as a tourism operator are full and busy 3-5 months per year when Tasmania is in its thriving summer period and then it falls off heavily. Having the Dark Sky Community application approved would provide a great promotional boost for Ross and help to increase its year-round tourism bookings, supporting all businesses to thrive in the area, allowing for continued investment, job creation, opening up of new business opportunities.

Tourism is the largest income stream for Tasmania and as this is fully embraced by government the budget for tourism related advertising and promotion will continue to grow. The Midlands is an area with a small footprint within the tourism advertising budget, we do not have that "drawcard" to make it a must-see tourist destination, so many people planning their trips here often do not hear of Ross until they book it as a midway point between other destinations. My estimation is that 75% of my guests are wonderfully surprised and delighted when they arrive in town and provide feedback that they would like to stay longer.

My belief is that Dark Skies Tourism could be that drawcard for encouraging more advertising and promotion to be given to Ross and its surrounding towns, providing visitors with a reason to stay here as a destination rather than as a convenient stop to somewhere else.

*Letter of support from Riverview at Ross Motel*

**From:** Stephanie Morrison <[whitecrofttas@gmail.com](mailto:whitecrofttas@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** 30 July 2025 at 2:33:33 pm AEST  
**To:** Nigel Davies <[nigelemrysdaives@icloud.com](mailto:nigelemrysdaives@icloud.com)>  
**Subject:** Re: Dark Sky info

Dear Nigel,

My name is Stephanie and I am the owner of White Croft Cottage in Ross Tasmania a self contained accommodation business and I am excited to support the prospect that our village could be part of the International Dark Sky Community . I have many guests who are interested in astronomy & many who come to see the auroras and the dark vast sky that can be seen here in Ross.

Best regards

Stephanie Morrison

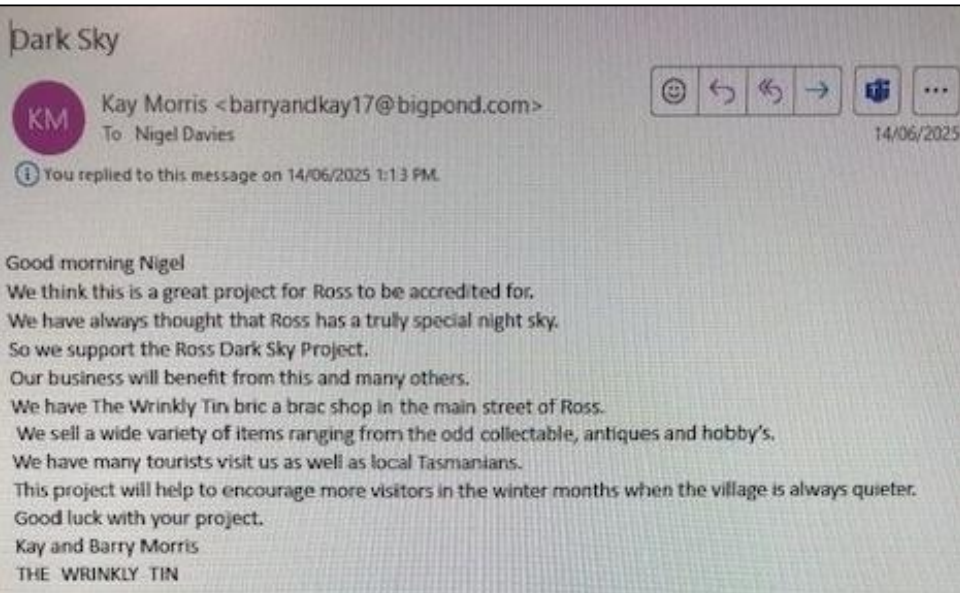


**Stephanie**

White Croft Cottage

e: [whitecrofttas@gmail.com](mailto:whitecrofttas@gmail.com) | w: [www.whitecroftcottage.com](http://www.whitecroftcottage.com)

28 Bond Street, Ross, Tasmania, 7209, Australia



## Ross Dark Sky Project



Christine Robinson <sncrob1@gmail.com>  
To: Nigel Davies



10:54 AM

 You forwarded this message on 25/06/2025 12:09 PM.

We have a business in Ross '1821 Crafts and Gifts'. 10 Church Street.

We are a collective stocking products hand-made in Tasmania both local and state wide.

My husband, Steve and myself manage the shop. We have lived in Ross for 12 years and fully support this project. Steve is a photographer and his work is for sale in the shop. Since our arrival in Ross he has been photographing the Aurora Australis and the night sky.

We believe making Ross a Dark Sky destination will be of enormous benefit to the village of Ross and the wider Tasmanian community.

Yours sincerely  
Christine Robinson  
1821 Crafts and Gifts Ross

**From:** Michael Smith

**Sent:** Wednesday, 9 July 2025 2:18 PM

**To:** Nigel Davies <[nigel@nda.com.au](mailto:nigel@nda.com.au)>

**Subject:** Support for the Ross Dark Sky Project

Hello Nigel

It's Michael Smith here from Books On Bridge.

As you know we are a small local book shop operating in Ross and have become aware of your efforts to achieve accreditation as a Dark Sky Community for Ross.

We think this is an exciting project which will be of immense benefit to not only our wider community but particularly our local businesses who will directly benefit from the increased visitation that will be generated, especially through our quieter winter months.

We fully support the Ross Dark Sky project and considering that it will have no negative community impact that we can see, we would be pleased to offer whatever support we can to show our commitment towards the project and to ensure it comes to fruition.

All the best

Michael Smith

Books On  
Bridge 

Michael Smith

0478 29 60 53

[booksonbridge@outlook.com](mailto:booksonbridge@outlook.com)

6-8 Bridge St.

ROSS

Tas. 7209

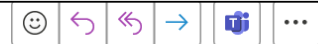
I'm a business owner of a tourist shop (Classwood) with wooden gifts made out of various woods. I have taken a lot of Aurora Australis photos in Ross and have made magnet, cards and postcards to sell in my shop. The tourists love them and knowing that the picture was taken just on the hill next to the shop.

I have heard about the Dark Sky [project](#) and I fully support it.

Candyce Hurren  
Owner/Manager of Classwood.



Robert Dunn <[australianextreme@gmail.com](mailto:australianextreme@gmail.com)>  
To: Nigel Davies



20/07/2025

Hi Nigel,  
My name is Rob Dunn & I am a business owner in Ross.  
My business is called Australian Extreme Chilli Condiments, My shop is at 34 Church Street Ross Tasmania.  
I make & sell my hand made award winning chilli infused sauces, salts, bbq rubs & more.  
I am in favour of the "Ross Dark Sky Project".

Kind regards,  
Rob Dunn.  
Australian Extreme Chilli Condiments.

## Media Articles on the Proposal

The application for accreditation as a Dark Sky Community has generated significant interest in the local media:

Saturday December 21, 2024  
**RELAX 57**

# relax

READING FOR YOUR WEEKEND



A night sky and blood moon over Penguin with an inset of Ross District Committee chair Nigel Davies. Pictures by Rodney Brathwaite and Phillip Biggs

## Tasmanian village goes dark

The town of Ross is on the path to promote 'astrotourism' through stargazing. AARON SMITH reports.

IN AN era of brighter skies from increased light pollution, one Tasmanian town is intent on remaining in the dark.

The village of Ross in the heart of the Midlands region is in the process of applying for place certification through DarkSky International. If successful in its bid, the locality will join more than 200 Dark Sky Places across 22 countries that are recognised for their stargazing potential.

Only five of these sites can be found in Australia, all of which are on the mainland. They include The Jump-Up in Winton, Queensland, Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park in New South Wales, and Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary in South Australia.

Ross District Committee chair Nigel Davies said the town suited this initiative due to its small size and remote location.

"We quite often have had people coming to the southern end of Ross to stargaze and look at auroras," he said.

"So I thought it would be an interesting idea to seek certification from DarkSky and promote Ross as a location for astrotourism."

If the non-profit accepts the village's nomination, it will become the second Dark Sky Community in the country behind Carrickalinga in South Australia. But that coastal town's small population of 409 people looks large in comparison to Ross, which had just 291 residents as of the 2021 census.

"You've got no light apart from the passing cars on the highway," Mr Davies said.

"If you look to the south from Ross, you can see probably 20 kilometres. Outlands is invisible over the horizon."

To qualify for certification, the village needs to submit light pollution readings that will be judged against the Bortle scale.

Created in 2001 by amateur astronomer John E. Bortle, this system classifies locations into one of nine groups, ranging from 'excellent dark sky site' to 'inner city sky', as the least visible. Initial readings appear positive for Ross, with the township considered a level two 'dark sky site', while part of Church Street meets the threshold for the illustrious level one ranking.

It's an impressive result for the village, as most localities of its size would be ranked level three for a 'rural sky' or level four as 'suburban/rural transition'.

"I'm in the process of borrowing a meter from The Wilderness Society that they're using in the south-west," Mr Davies said.

"We will have to submit readings from this meter as part of our application to prove that the area qualifies in its current state."

Dark Sky Communities must retrofit all publicly owned lighting within five years of registration while ensuring they don't lose their status through the mass installation of street lights or neon signs.

That would pose a challenge for any town, no matter their size. Mr Davies said this initiative aimed to prevent worsening light pollution through the support of residents and local businesses.

"I think that the community will be interested in the concept and over time, it will bring more people to Ross," he said.

"The idea of astrotourism is a fairly new one, but there are places in New Zealand which have been registered for a number of years which attract quite a lot of people."

As a Dark Sky Community, Ross would be obligated to host two promotional events a year to explain visible constellations and other aspects of the nighttime sky.

Five sites across the village have been identified as strong stargazing locations due to their wide horizons and absence of light. The best of them is found on Church Street to the town's south, but its potential is limited by a nearby street light. Having received letters of support from both the council and Tasmanian Dark Sky Association president Landon Bannister, Mr Davies will now approach Ross businesses for their approval.

"It's not a straightforward or quick process, you have to show that you have community support," he said.

Launceston Examiner article, 21 December, 2024

### Tasmanian village goes dark to promote 'astrotourism' through stargazing



By Aaron Smith

In an era of brighter skies from increased light pollution, one Tasmanian town is intent on remaining in the dark.

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"So I thought it would be an interesting idea to seek certification from [DarkSky](#) and promote Ross as a location for astrotourism."



Church Street in Ross. Picture by Phillip Biggs

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But that coastal town's small population of 409 people looks large in comparison to Ross, which had just 291 residents as of the 2021 census.

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The Bortle scale showcased at Cerro Paranal in Chile. Picture by the European Southern Observatory

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Ross District Committee chair Nigel Davies. Picture by Phillip Biggs

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The Church Street and Roseneath Road intersection in Ross. Picture by Phillip Biggs

The Ross District Committee put a recommendation to [the Northern Midlands Council](#) back in October to install a shade on the light which would block out its southern and western sides.

The local government unanimously approved this request, with councillor Alison Andrews AM calling it "a really exciting project".

"There's huge support in the community and they're already busy getting it all happening," she said at the time.

Mayor Mary Knowles has since written to TasNetworks in support of the initiative, with the state-owned company set to conduct a review of the light.

Having received letters of support from both [the council](#) and Tasmanian Dark Sky Association president Landon Bannister, Mr Davies will now approach Ross businesses for their approval.

"It's not a straightforward or quick process, you have to show that you have community support," he said.

"There's an initial enquiry/application to determine if the [area](#) is suitable. Once that's prepared and we get an affirmative response from [DarkSky International](#), we then pay our application fee and lodge the full application."

"I understand it's a process that takes 12 to 24 months to complete."



## DISCOVER ROSS:

Heritage by Day, Stars by Night and Magic All Year Round

### ROSS REACHES FOR THE STARS: HISTORIC TASMANIAN VILLAGE BIDS FOR DARK SKY STATUS

The tiny Northern Midlands village of Ross, known for its convict – built bridge and charming colonial streetscapes, is now looking to the heavens – quite literally. The township of Ross has officially lodged an application to be a Dark Sky Community, one of only a handful of locations worldwide recognised for their pristine skies. If successful it will be the second Dark Sky Community in Australia, adding new dimension to Tasmania's appeal as a travel destination.

The Northern Midlands long celebrated for fine wine and locally produced food, unspoiled wilderness, and rich heritage. Now the Northern Midlands is shining – or rather dimming – in a new way. The region's naturally dark skies, untainted by the artificial glow of city lights, is fast becoming one of its most valuable assets. "Visitors from the mainland often can't believe what they're seeing," says Nigel Davies, Chair of the Ross Local District Committee. "People from Melbourne or Sydney have never seen the Milky Way like this – sweeping across the sky, bright and breathtaking. For many, it's their first glimpse of an aurora with the naked eye."



The global rise of 'noctourism' – travel focused on night-time experiences such as stargazing, meteor showers, and night wildlife tours is fuelling this movement. Even the BBC has listed 'noctourism' as one of the seven travel trends shaping 2025 and the potential impact on travel destinations worldwide. Davies says Ross has already complete the first stage of the accreditation process and is currently developing a formal lighting policy as required by Dark Sky International, the body responsible for certifying dark sky locations. "There's strong support from our residents and from Northern Midlands Council," he said. "We've even formed a Ross Astronomical Society to host stargazing and astrophotography nights. It's a grassroots effort that's growing quickly." As Tasmania positions itself as a beacon for nocturnal tourism, Ross is leading the way – not with floodlights or fireworks, but with the simple, ancient wonder of a sky full of stars.

ABOVE: Ross Bridge. BELOW: Uniting Church at Ross. Photos courtesy of Scott Wilmot Bennett.

*Northern Courier article, June, 2025*

## Dark Sky project

Would you be interested in investigating a Dark Sky designation for your town or community? We often publish photographs from locals of the aurora, moonrises, and the like. We know people love looking at, and photographing, the night sky. If you're interested, read on...and then ask the Southern Midlands Council for their support.



The Bortle Scale measures the darkness of the night skies. Ross enjoys a reading of 2

The human brain is a 'difference engine'. It does not waste processing power on things that do not change from moment to moment. Rather, it focuses attention on sudden changes – a burn from a hot pan, or a sudden movement on the edge of vision.

In the same way, we become used to features in our surroundings that don't change, and we take them for granted. Take the night skies outside your door in the Southern Midlands. Have you ever considered how truly dark they are and how magnificent the Milky Way is, stretching in a great arc across the heavens?

This is something the residents of mainland Australia can't see beneath the light domes of the big cities. And when they visit us in rural Tasmania and step outside the door at night, it creates a 'wow' moment – because it is something different, more impressive and thought-provoking than their night sky experiences back home.

The loss of dark night skies for most of the population of the developed world is creating a new appreciation of dark sky phenomena, such as auroras, comets, the Milky Way and the planets. The BBC in the United Kingdom referred to this phenomenon as astro-tourism and identified it as one of five hot new tourism trends in 2025.

Here in the Southern Midlands, Oatlands recently hosted Dark Sky Moments, an exhibition of aurora photographs by Geoff Curry at the Air Space Gallery.

And just over the border in the Northern Midlands, the village of Ross is applying to Dark Sky International for accreditation as a Dark Sky Community.

Dark Sky International was founded in 1988 to combat light pollution and protect natural darkness. There is currently only one other Dark Sky Community in Australia and, if successful, Ross will become the second.

To achieve this status, Ross has to demonstrate that its night skies are truly dark by recording readings with a Sky Quality Meter and, in conjunction with the Northern Midlands Council, develop a lighting policy that ensures the night skies in Ross and other small Northern Midlands towns remain dark in the future.

The recently formed Ross Astronomical Society hopes to support this initiative by organising night sky viewing opportunities and educational events on astro-photography.

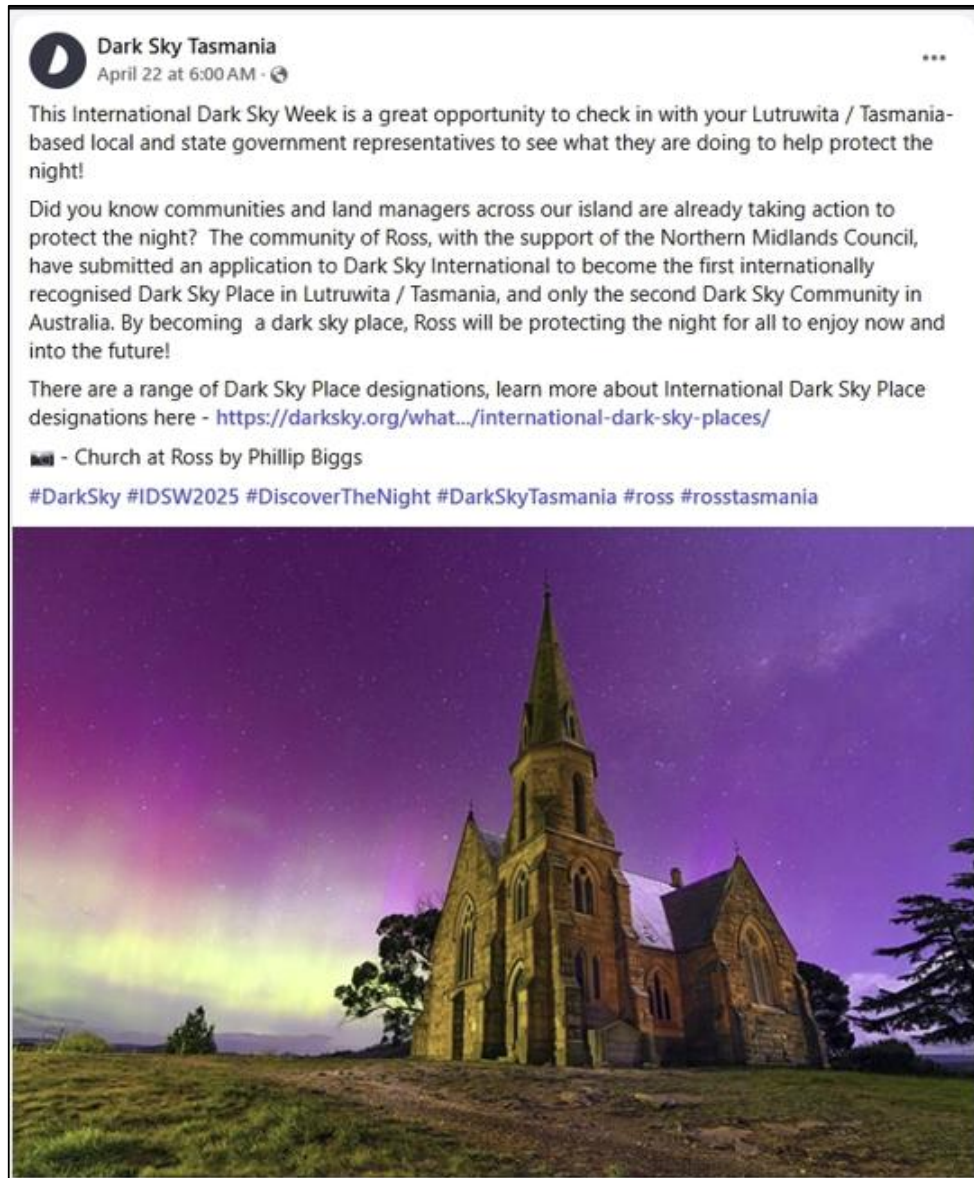
Success in these initiatives will complement the existing attractions of Ross – the tree lined streets, historic buildings and the Ross Bridge – especially in the quieter winter months when the skies are at their darkest.

Dark Sky International also accredits larger areas for their dark skies. The Wilderness Society, with the support of the Tasmanian Government, is applying to accredit South-West Tasmania as a Dark Sky Sanctuary, and the Wellington Park Management Trust in Hobart is applying to accredit Wellington Park as a Dark Sky Reserve.

With all this activity, can Tasmania develop a reputation as the Dark Sky State?

**Nigel Davies**

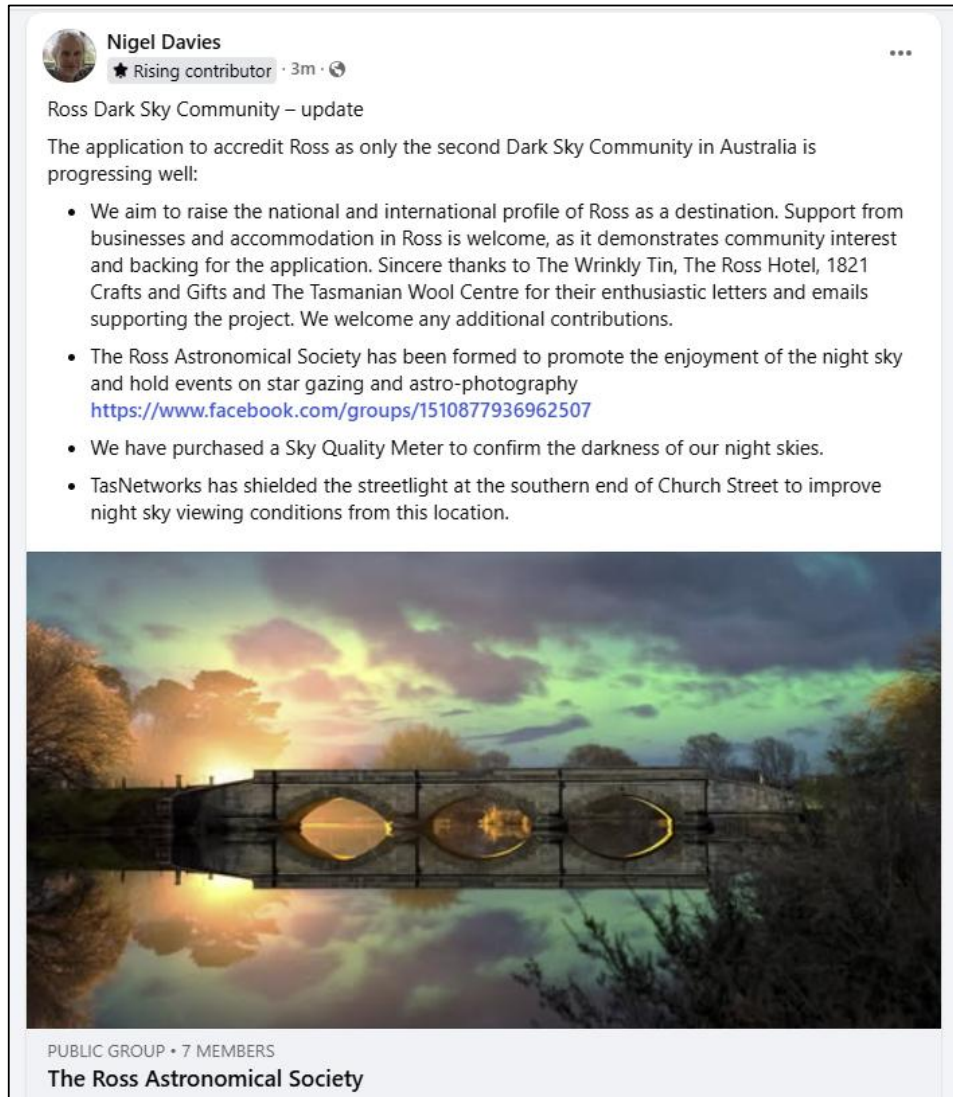
*Chair, Ross Local District Committee*



Facebook post from Dark Sky Tasmania, 22 April, 2025

## Community Outreach

We publish regular updates on the Ross Neighbourhood News Facebook page to keep the community informed about the application and the benefits of accreditation.



Ross Neighbourhood News Facebook page post: 14 July 2025

## Community Events

We plan an ongoing program of public events to engage both residents of Ross and visitors in the concept and aims of DarkSky. We have three strategies to achieve this program:

### Strategy 1: Establish the Ross Astronomical Society

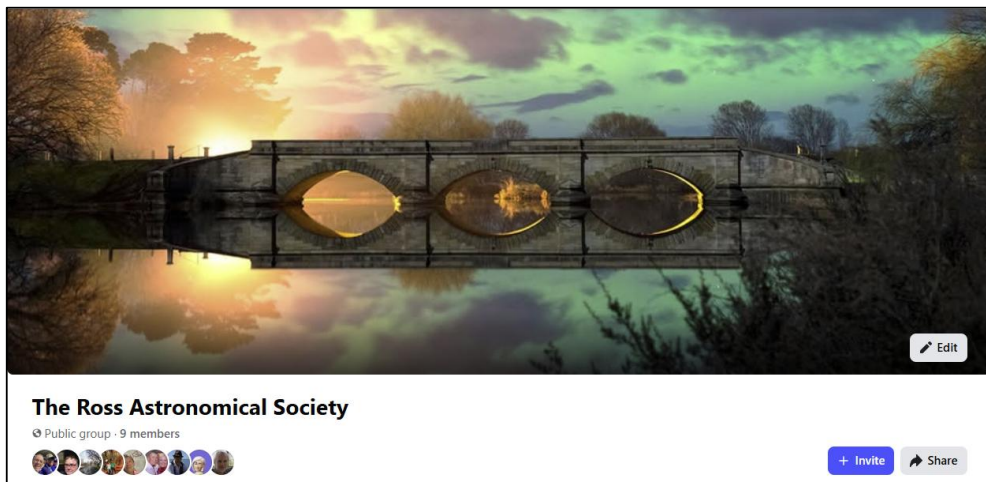
Our first action was to establish the Ross Astronomical Society. The initial membership comprised three members of the Ross Local District Committee and a fourth non-member. All own telescopes and have varying levels of expertise in astronomy and astrophotography. One member, Scott Bennett, is the author of the publication *Ross by Night*.

The first event organised by the Society was a visit to an exhibition of aurora photographs at the Air Space Gallery in nearby Oatlands:



*Scott Bennett, Rod Haigh, Nigel Davies and Marcus Rodrigues, founders of the Ross Astronomical Society at the Air Space Gallery in Oatlands 7 June 2025*

Once established, the group set up a public Facebook page and invited interest from the local Ross community. Five new members joined in the first week:



*The Ross Astronomical Society Facebook page, one week after set-up: 15 July 2025*

## Strategy 2: Engage with Local Business and Accommodation Providers

It is our intention that the Ross Astronomical Society play a central role in promoting the Dark Sky Community by organising events, posting on Facebook and interacting with local accommodation providers. On securing accreditation, each local business will be provided with hand-outs promoting Ross as a Dark Sky Community for distribution to visitors (see Appendix C: Resources for Residents).

Local businesses sell Scott Bennett's publication *Ross by Night*, and postcards of aurora taken by other astro-photographers in the town. The owners of the Ross Riverview Motel have approached the Society to provide speakers for residential photography courses they are planning.

## Strategy 3: Engage with Local Event Organisers

Ross has become the home of several annual events. These include *The Ross Marathon*, *Picnic at Ross*, a vintage car event, *TasFaire*, a fantasy-themed medieval festival, *The Tasmanian Chilli and Cheese Fest* and *Heartlands Autumn Harvest Festival*.



*The Ross Marathon is held in September*



*The classic car festival Picnic at Ross in May*



*TasFaire is a medieval-themed event in April*

By co-promoting evening dark sky activities with these events, we hope to encourage day visitors to stay overnight and attend evening events.

## Plan to Meet DarkSky Requirements: Community Outreach

The following actions are planned to ensure community outreach meets Dark Sky requirements:

| Action                                                                                                         | Deadline         | Comment                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attend Dark Sky Symposium, Melbourne                                                                           | 19-21 March 2025 | Completed                                                                                                       |
| Develop contacts made at Symposium                                                                             | April 2025       | Completed - Wilderness Society, Wellington Park Management Trust, Aurora Australis Tasmania, Tasmanian Green MP |
| Promote Dark Sky Community accreditation in local media                                                        | Ongoing          | Four articles published to date                                                                                 |
| Write Dark Sky 'explainer' for local groups                                                                    | May 2025         | Completed                                                                                                       |
| Visit businesses and accommodation providers with explainer, inform them about Dark Sky and seek their support | June 2025        | Completed                                                                                                       |
| Form Ross Astronomical Society and create Facebook page                                                        | June 2025        | Completed                                                                                                       |
| Publish regular Dark Sky updates on Ross Facebook page                                                         | July 2025        | Ongoing                                                                                                         |
| Write Dark Sky promotional material for distribution to local outlets after accreditation                      | December 2025    | First draft completed                                                                                           |
| Organise Dark Sky events with Ross Pub and Motel                                                               | 2026             | Preliminary contacts made with accommodation owners                                                             |
| Identify organisers of compatible annual events and discuss Dark Sky supportive events                         | 2026             |                                                                                                                 |
| Discuss concept of Tasmania – the Dark Sky State with state government                                         | 2026             |                                                                                                                 |

## Ross Night Sky Conditions

The village of Ross is becoming increasingly recognized for the quality of its night sky, making it a potentially valuable location for astronomical observation and astrotourism.

### Geographical Setting and Low Light Pollution

Ross's location in the heart of Tasmania's Midlands places it far from the light pollution typically found in larger urban centres:

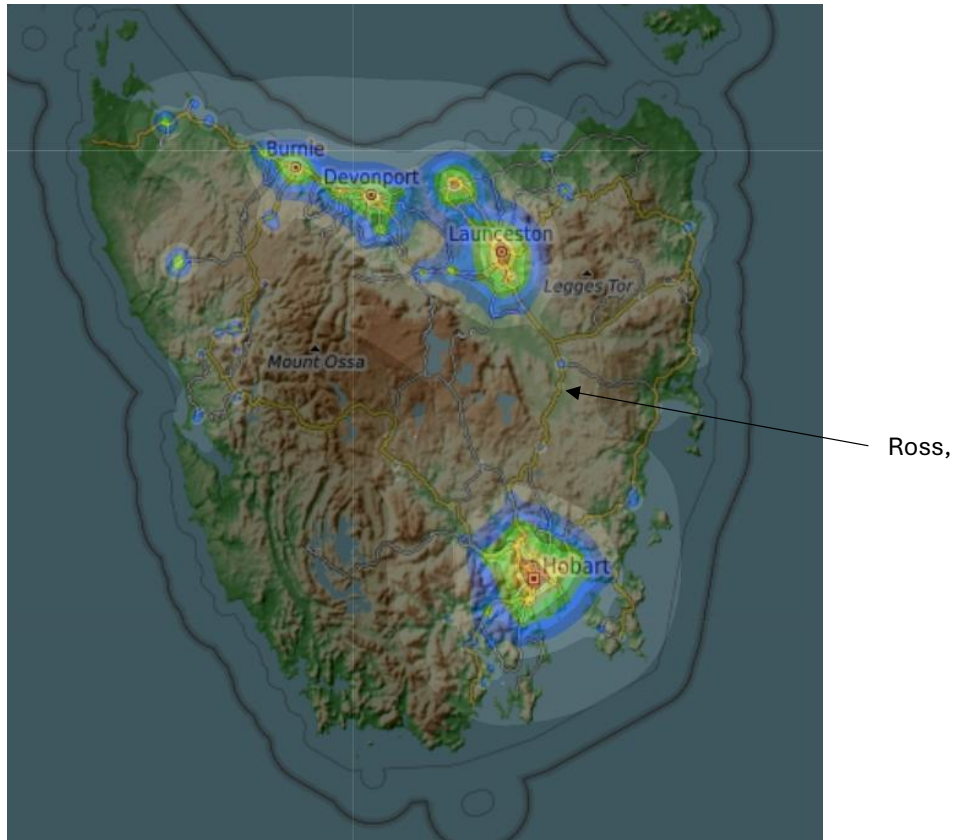
- With a population of 400 people and no industrial or commercial development, the village generates minimal artificial lighting
- There is no illuminated signage
- There are no floodlit sports facilities
- The dense canopy of 100-year-old trees forms a canopy along all the main streets and greatly reduces any upward reflection of artificial light at night
- The surrounding countryside — largely composed of grazing land and scattered farmsteads — contributes almost no light interference. This low level of skyglow is one of the most important features that make Ross ideal for night-sky viewing



*The major thoroughfares of Ross are lined with dense arcades of old growth Elm, Oak and Ash, reducing upwards reflection of artificial light*

Tasmania itself is recognized for its dark skies, but many parts of the state are forested or mountainous. Ross, on the other hand, lies on the open plains, offering wide horizons and unobstructed views of the sky. This flat terrain provides ideal conditions for observing celestial events

such as meteor showers, planetary conjunctions, and the Milky Way, particularly during the winter months when the skies are often crisp and clear.



Ross is located approximately midway between the light domes of Launceston, to the north, and Hobart, to the south. It is 12 km south of Campbell Town and 31 km north of Oatlands.

## Sky Clarity and Atmospheric Conditions

The Midlands climate is typically dry and cool, especially in winter and spring — two seasons that often provide the best viewing conditions for astronomers. The region experiences frequent clear nights, with less cloud cover than Tasmania’s western and southern coasts, which are more influenced by maritime weather systems. The cool, dry air also reduces atmospheric turbulence, a factor known as “seeing” in astronomical terms, which can distort the clarity of celestial objects when viewed through telescopes.

While some areas of Tasmania experience higher rainfall and humidity, the Ross area is in a rain shadow, making it drier and more stable for nighttime observations. Average annual rainfall between 2020 – 2024 was 546.3mm. The winter observing months of May, June and July are the driest, with average monthly falls of 32mm, 37mm and 37mm respectively. Air quality is also generally excellent due to the low population density and absence of major industry, further enhancing sky visibility.

Tasmania itself is feted as having the cleanest air on the planet, as measured by the Bureau of Meteorology station at Cape Grim at the northwest tip of the state. This region’s air is so pristine it is used as a baseline for global atmospheric studies.

## Astronomical Opportunities and Community Potential

Although Ross does not currently host a formal astronomical observatory, it has recently formed a Ross Astronomical Society. Two members of the Society have established reputations: Marcus Rodrigues has an international reputation as an astro-photographer and recently visited CERN by invitation, and Scott Bennett is the author of the publication *Ross by Night*. The location and sky quality of Ross present an excellent opportunity for amateur astronomers, astro-photographers, and dark-sky tourism operators.

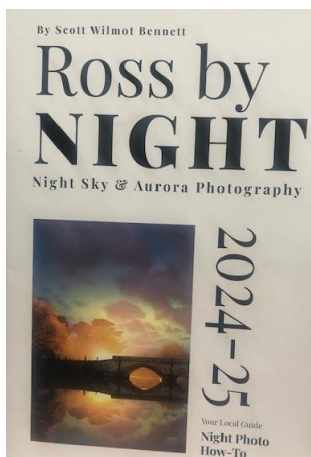
The clear visibility of major southern hemisphere constellations, such as Crux (the Southern Cross), Centaurus, and Carina, combined with the possibility of seeing the Magellanic Clouds and Aurora Australis (Southern Lights) during periods of heightened solar activity, makes the area especially attractive to southern sky enthusiasts.

The Ross Riverview Motel is considering “dark sky packages” that combine stargazing and astro-photography courses with heritage tourism. This dual appeal — history by day, stars by night — could give Ross a unique niche in Tasmania’s growing astrotourism scene.

## Aurora Viewing Potential

Ross is located at a latitude 42°S where the Aurora Australis can be observed, especially during periods of strong geomagnetic activity. The town’s low light pollution and unobstructed southern views provide excellent conditions for aurora viewing when the solar wind and space weather conditions are favourable.

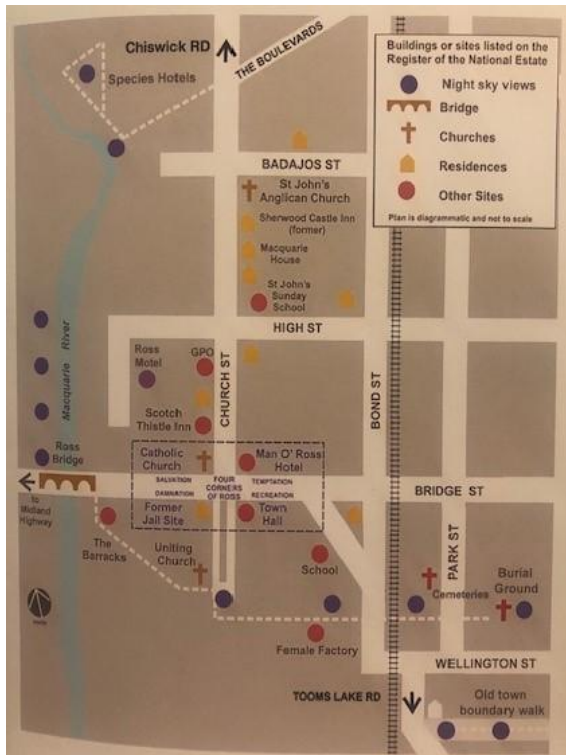
The aurora viewing potential of Ross is well demonstrated by Scott Bennett’s publication *Ross by Night*, with its aurora photographs, map of the best night sky viewing locations and ‘how to’ section on aurora photography. The ability to witness the aurora from a historically rich and easily accessible village is an added draw for both local and international visitors.



*Ross by Night*



*Aurora and the Ross Uniting Church*



*Aurora viewing locations in Ross*



*Aurora viewed from Church St, Ross*

*Photographs from Scott Bennett's publication Ross by Night*

## Monitoring and Data Collection

### Initial Observations

We began monitoring the darkness of the Ross night sky prior to lodging the initial pre-application. Although viewing conditions in Ross seemed to be excellent and the guesstimate was somewhere between 1 and 2 on the Bortle scale we wanted a more quantitative assessment.

The Wilderness Society, currently applying to accredit South-West Tasmania as a Dark Sky Sanctuary, loaned us a Sky Quality Meter that was donated by Paddy Pallin. This enabled us to take the following readings shown in the table below. The readings were all taken at the location of the (now shielded) streetlight at the southern end of Church Street. The darkest readings were better than the 21.2 mpsas required for dark sky accreditation. The readings were recorded in the Globe at Night website.

Some of these readings were taken with a moon in the sky, as we were not aware at the time of the preference for readings to be taken on moonless nights.

|    | A                       | B                         | C                | D                | E                | F                | G              |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1  | <b>SQM Observations</b> |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 2  |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 3  | <b>Location:</b>        | Ross, Tasmania, Australia |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 4  | Latitude:               | -42.032335                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 5  | Longitude:              | 147.492235                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 6  |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 7  | <b>Observations:</b>    |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 8  |                         | <b>Reading 1</b>          | <b>Reading 2</b> | <b>Reading 3</b> | <b>Reading 4</b> | <b>Reading 5</b> | <b>Average</b> |
| 9  |                         | 19.87                     | 19.49            | 19.79            | 19.9             | 20               | 19.81          |
| 10 | Date:                   | 24/12/2024                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 11 | Time:                   | 10:30pm                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 12 | % cloud cover:          | 25%                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 13 | Temperature:            | 22C                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 14 |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 15 |                         | <b>Reading 1</b>          | <b>Reading 2</b> | <b>Reading 3</b> | <b>Reading 4</b> | <b>Reading 5</b> | <b>Average</b> |
| 16 |                         | 21.36                     | 21.38            | 21.36            | 21.37            | 21.39            | 21.37          |
| 17 | Date:                   | 29/12/2024                |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 18 | Time:                   | 11:36pm                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 19 | % cloud cover:          | 10%                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 20 | Temperature:            | 23C                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 21 |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 22 |                         | <b>Reading 1</b>          | <b>Reading 2</b> | <b>Reading 3</b> | <b>Reading 4</b> | <b>Reading 5</b> | <b>Average</b> |
| 23 |                         | 20.8                      | 20.8             | 20.81            | 20.84            | 20.87            | 20.82          |
| 24 | Date:                   | 2/01/2025                 |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 25 | Time:                   | 4:30am                    |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 26 | % cloud cover:          | 0%                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 27 | Temperature:            | 18C                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 28 | Notes:                  | Visible aurora            |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 29 |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 30 |                         | <b>Reading 1</b>          | <b>Reading 2</b> | <b>Reading 3</b> | <b>Reading 4</b> | <b>Reading 5</b> | <b>Average</b> |
| 31 |                         | 21.09                     | 21.07            | 21.06            | 21.04            | 21.03            | 21.06          |
| 32 | Date:                   | 5/01/2025                 |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 33 | Time:                   | 3:30am                    |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 34 | % cloud cover:          | 20%                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 35 | Temperature:            | 25C                       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |
| 36 |                         |                           |                  |                  |                  |                  |                |

*SQM observations at Ross between 24/12/2024 and 5/1/2025*

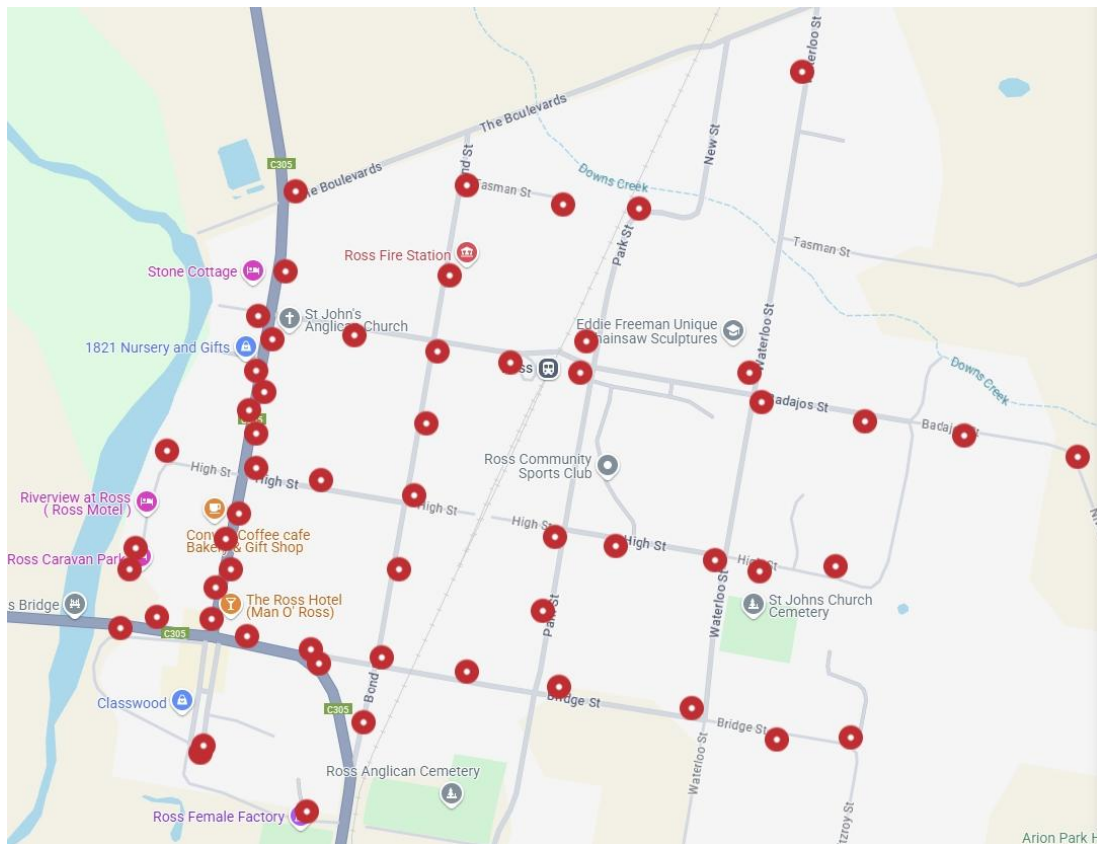
## Outdoor Lighting

There are three categories of lighting in Ross that are relevant to dark sky conditions: street lighting, external porch and façade lighting on public buildings, and floodlighting of historic monuments. There is no illuminated signage or sports ground floodlighting.

The status of each of these categories of lighting is described below.

### Street Lighting in Ross

There are 53 streetlights within the boundaries of Ross and an additional two streetlights just outside the boundaries. All lights are maintained by the Tasmanian electrical utility TasNetworks under the direction, and at the cost of, the Northern Midlands Council.



List of the 53 streetlights in Ross as supplied by TasNetworks:

| ID     | Type     | Description               | Watts | Pole # |
|--------|----------|---------------------------|-------|--------|
| 203807 | LED_18_1 | LED 18 TasNetworks BAU    | 21.9  | 347263 |
| 75587  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                   | 17    | 347255 |
| 75606  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                   | 17    | 347351 |
| 75607  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                   | 17    | 347387 |
| 75623  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                   | 17    | 347307 |
| 212298 | LED_75   | LED 75 Aldridge VLED MKII | 74    | 347381 |
| 75670  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                   | 17    | 347330 |

|        |          |                                        |      |        |
|--------|----------|----------------------------------------|------|--------|
| 75671  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347328 |
| 75672  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347281 |
| 75674  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347357 |
| 75737  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347345 |
| 75739  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347250 |
| 75740  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 383964 |
| 75756  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347312 |
| 54413  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347388 |
| 205840 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347391 |
| 205892 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347342 |
| 207480 | LED_17_1 | LED 17W Berlin decorative bottom entry | 19.1 | 325294 |
| 207487 | LED_17_1 | LED 17W Berlin decorative bottom entry | 19.1 | 347386 |
| 75600  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347405 |
| 75616  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347288 |
| 62457  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347380 |
| 62466  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347377 |
| 75668  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347354 |
| 75677  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347338 |
| 75684  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347297 |
| 89011  | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347348 |
| 205219 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347277 |
| 205886 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347382 |
| 205887 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347385 |
| 75598  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347369 |
| 75615  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347415 |
| 62459  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347384 |
| 62461  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347390 |
| 75664  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347259 |
| 75697  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347402 |
| 75747  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347266 |
| 83836  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347376 |
| 212992 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 347316 |
| 75601  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347427 |
| 75617  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347359 |
| 75619  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347373 |
| 210085 | LED_14_3 | LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7 | 228258 |
| 62456  | HPS_70_E | High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86   | 347379 |
| 75669  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347302 |
| 75678  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347335 |
| 75683  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347367 |
| 75703  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 350388 |
| 75710  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347305 |
| 75719  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347272 |
| 75733  | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347299 |

|       |          |                                        |      |        |
|-------|----------|----------------------------------------|------|--------|
| 75751 | LED_14_1 | 14W LED                                | 17   | 347423 |
| 87501 | LED_17_1 | LED 17W Berlin decorative bottom entry | 19.1 | 347383 |

### Summary Table of Streetlighting

The following table shows the number of each luminaire, together with the wattage and approximate temperature of emitted light. The light temperature was measured using the Kev WB app on an iPhone. There are six types of luminaires in use.

| Description                            | Watts | Number | Kelvin |
|----------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| 14W LED                                | 17    | 34     | 4500   |
| High Pressure Sodium (elliptical) 70   | 86    | 6      | 2700   |
| LED 14 Aldridge PLED II                | 17.7  | 8      | 4500   |
| LED 17W Berlin decorative bottom entry | 19.1  | 3      | 4500   |
| LED 18 TasNetworks BAU                 | 21.9  | 1      | 4500   |
| LED 75 Aldridge VLED MKII              | 74    | 1      | 4500   |

The High Pressure Sodium lights meet DarkSky requirements with a temperature of 2700K. Fortunately, lights of this type constitute most of the lights in the main Church Street thoroughfare, where street lighting is most dense. Unfortunately, these atmospheric 'yellow' lights are being phased out by TasNetworks as they fail in favour of brighter 'white' LEDs, due to the higher wattage requirements. This is a serious threat to the heritage night-time streetscape in Ross and needs to be addressed.

In a recent survey, 99 respondents – 99% of total respondents – supported retention of the yellow sodium streetlights in Church Street.

## Plan to Meet DarkSky Requirements: Public Buildings and Businesses

The following actions are planned to ensure lighting on public buildings and businesses conform with the Lighting Management Policy:

| Action                                                                          | Deadline  | Comment                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------------|
| Identify suitable compliant luminaires and cost with Sylvania Schreder          | July 2025 | Completed – waiting for response       |
| Discuss replacement of two porch lights with owners of The Ross Hotel           | July 2025 | Completed – waiting for implementation |
| Write proposal to Council for replacement luminaire program on public buildings | 2026      |                                        |
| Write proposal to Australia Post for replacement luminaires on Post Office      | 2026      |                                        |
| Obtain Council agreement to replacement luminaire program                       | 2027      |                                        |
| Obtain Australia Post agreement to replacement luminaire program                | 2027      |                                        |
| Implement replacement luminaire programs                                        | 2028-2030 |                                        |

## Floodlighting

Two historic monuments are floodlit at night. These are the Cenotaph (three floodlights) and the Ross Bridge (one floodlight).

| Location    | Kelvin | Comments                                                |
|-------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Cenotaph    | 3577   | Three floods, timer operation, extinguished at midnight |
| Ross Bridge |        | One flood, no timer                                     |



*Flood lighting at the Cenotaph*



*Flood lighting at the Ross Bridge*



Cenotaph flood lights



Ross Bridge flood light

### Plan to Meet DarkSky Requirements: Floodlighting

The following actions are planned to ensure floodlighting conforms with the Lighting Management Policy:

| Action                                                                            | Deadline | Comment |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| Determine cost of installing timer on the Ross Bridge floodlight                  | 2026     |         |
| Write proposal to Council for installation of timer on the Ross Bridge floodlight | 2026     |         |
| Obtain Council agreement for installation of timer on the Ross Bridge floodlight  | 2027     |         |
| Install timer on the Ross Bridge Floodlight                                       | 2028     |         |

### Dark Sky Lighting Policy

The proposed Dark Sky Lighting Policy is shown in Appendix A.

### Summary

The community of Ross is enthusiastic about our future contribution to reducing light pollution, improving human and environmental health, minimising energy use and celebrating our night skies. As a Dark Sky Community, we will commit to achieving our goals and those of Dark Sky International. We will commit to support Dark Sky International campaigns and projects. We will commit to assist emerging Dark Sky communities in their journeys. We commit to share annual updates with Dark Sky International (see Appendix D: Annual Report Pro Forma).

## Appendix A: Dark Sky Lighting Policy

|                            |                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Reference        | Provide leadership, good governance, and efficient, effective and responsive Council services                                  |
| File Reference / Record No |                                                                                                                                |
| Responsibility             |                                                                                                                                |
| Version Number             | 1.0                                                                                                                            |
| Effective Date             | Feb 2026                                                                                                                       |
| Last Revised Date          |                                                                                                                                |
| Minute Book Reference      |                                                                                                                                |
| Next Review Date           |                                                                                                                                |
| Applicable Legislation     | Local Government Act 1999<br>Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016<br>Australian Standards<br>Electricity Act 1996 |
| Related Policies           | Nil                                                                                                                            |

### 1. **Objective**

- a. The Northern Midlands Council recognises the uniqueness and opportunities available to communities within the Local Government Authority (LGA) to seek recognition from the International Dark-Sky Association as an International Dark Sky Community. This is the case given the limited existing lighting infrastructure within the semi-rural environment and the shelter provided from suburban light spill by the hills & distance throughout the district.
- b. The International Dark-Sky Association encourages outdoor lighting practices that will minimise light pollution, glare, light trespass, and sky glow to preserve the natural dark of the night sky, prevent lighting nuisances on properties and reduce artificial light effects on wildlife. While maintaining the rural atmosphere and village character of the applicable communities.
- c. Council under this Dark Sky Lighting Policy aims to achieve the following for the nominated Dark Sky Communities:
  - i. Ensure that Council, other Government bodies and private landholders within an area designated or seeking accreditation as an International Dark Sky Community, understand how they can assist attaining, preserving, and promoting the International Dark Sky Community concept.

- ii. Ensure all new public lighting within an area designated or seeking accreditation as an International Dark Sky Community, meets the standards and requirements expected by the International Dark Sky Association.
- iii. Retrofit existing outdoor public lighting within an area designated or seeking accreditation as an International Dark Sky Community, to meet the standards and requirements expected by the International Dark-Sky Association.
- d. This policy forms the enforceable lighting management framework required under the Dark Sky International 'Dark Sky Community' Program and is intended to satisfy all mandatory lighting criteria for accreditation and ongoing compliance.

## 2. **Scope**

- a. This policy shall only apply to nominated dark sky communities as decided in a council meeting, while actively seeking or where accreditation has been gained from the International DarkSky Association as an International Dark Sky Community.
- b. Communities can be added or removed from being included in the Dark Sky policy through council passing a resolution to add or remove a proposed town.
- c. This policy shall apply to all public lighting and all private outdoor lighting within the legal boundary of any designated Dark Sky Community.

## 3. **Definition**

- a. For the purpose of this policy, certain words, phrases and terms used herein shall have the meanings assigned to them by this section:
  - *“Correlated Colour Temperature (CCT)”*: A specification of the colour appearance of the light emitted by a lamp, relating its colour to the colour of light from a reference source when heated to a particular temperature, measured in degrees kelvin (K).
  - *“Direct Illumination”*: Illumination resulting from light emitted directly from a lamp, luminary or reflector. This does not include light reflected from other surfaces, such as the ground or building faces.
  - *“International Dark Sky Community”*: An International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) is a town, city, municipality or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal dark skies.
  - *“Floodlight”*: A fixture or lamp designed to “flood” an area with light. A specific form of lamp or fixture designed to direct its output in a specific direction. Such lamps are often designated by the manufacturer and are commonly used in residential outdoor lighting. These lights must not emit light above the 45-degree plane, must not exceed 1,000 lumens and must be fitted with timers.
  - *“Fully Shielded”*: An outdoor light fixture designed so that the installed fixture emits 0.0% uplight (U0) above the horizontal plane of the lowest part of the fixture. These light fixtures must be shielded in and of themselves. Surrounding structures, like canopies, are not to be considered when determining if the fixture is fully cut off. Fully Shielded fixtures must be

appropriately mounted so that the shielding prevents light from escaping above the horizontal and all light is directed downward.

- *“Light Pollution”*: Any adverse effect of non-natural light sources. Often used to denote “sky glow” from cities or towns, but also includes glare, light trespass, visual clutter and other adverse effects of lighting.
- *“Light Source”*: The part of a lighting fixture that produces light, e.g. the bulb.
- *“Light Trespass”*: Light falling where it is not wanted or needed. Spill light falling over property lines that illuminate adjacent grounds or buildings in an objectionable manner.
- *“Luminaire”*: A complete electric light unit.
- *“Outdoor Light Fitting”*: An outdoor electrically powered illuminating lamp or similar device used for lighting structures, parking lots, pathways, service canopies, recreational areas, signs or other similar outdoor lighting uses.
- *“Recreational Lighting”*: Lighting used to illuminate sports fields, ball courts, playgrounds or similar outdoor recreational facilities.
- *“Spotlight”*: A fixture or lamp designed to light a small area very brightly. See definition of Floodlight.
- *“Unshielded Fixture”*: A fixture that allows light to be emitted above the horizontal either directly from the lamp or indirectly from the fixture or reflector. Any fixture not fully cut off.
- *“Curfew”*: A defined time period during which certain categories of outdoor lighting must be extinguished or reduced in output to comply with Dark Sky requirements.
- *“Maximum Light Output (Lumen Limit)”*: The maximum permitted initial lumen output from an outdoor luminaire as installed.

#### **4. Policy Statement**

- a. The Northern Midlands Council recognises the uniqueness and opportunities available to communities within the LGA to seek recognition in the form of accreditation as an International Dark Sky Community. Given the opportunities for various communities to seek this recognition and the complex tenure arrangements (possibility of many hundreds of privately owned parcels of land) within these areas, lighting management shall be delivered through two streams:
  - i. Public Lighting Infrastructure: being lighting infrastructure owned/managed by Council, government bodies and/or other service authorities for the purpose of lighting public spaces and infrastructure.
  - ii. Private Infrastructure: focusing on community education, with private landowners being encouraged to upgrade existing external lights to be compliant with the International Dark Sky standards for International Dark Sky Communities.

## **5. Policy**

### **a. New Public Infrastructure**

- i. If meeting all requirements under Australian Standards and/or other local authority standards, installation of all new Council managed outdoor public lighting shall be in accordance with the minimum requirements for lighting under International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018).
- ii. Lighting shall be 'Dark Sky Friendly' by considering the following principles:
  1. Outdoor public lighting must only be installed when deemed necessary and must only be activated when needed.
  2. The intensity of outdoor lighting must be appropriate for its intended use.
  3. All outdoor public lighting installed by Council shall be fully shielded (0% uplight, backlight, uplight and glare (BUG) rating U0) and shall have a correlated colour temperature not exceeding 3000K, with a preference for 2200K.
  4. Maximum initial lumen output per fixture shall not exceed limits specified under Dark Sky International guidelines unless specifically exempted.

### **b. Public Street Lighting**

- i. The Northern Midlands Council specifies the lowest lighting level category, as indicated in current Australian Standards, to keep the lighting level (and tariff costs) as low as possible; whilst recognising Council's obligations around crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
- ii. Installation of all new public street lighting will be to the minimum specifications in accordance with current Australian Standards and utilising standard TasNetworks luminaires which meet colour temperature requirements under International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)
- iii All street lighting shall utilise luminaires with an uplight rating of U0 and backlight/ glare values meeting BUG limits appropriate to their location.
- iv. Where TasNetworks does not offer compliant luminaires, Council shall not approve installation of non-compliant units and shall continue operating existing lighting until compliant luminaires become available.
- v. For all new street lighting installations shielding and/or aero screen fittings shall be utilised as standard.
- iv. Layout for new street lighting shall be prepared by a suitably qualified lighting engineer, ensuring that lighting is minimised while still maintaining minimum standards required under Australian Standards.

**c. Private Development**

- i. All private outdoor lighting shall be fully shielded unless the fixture emits fewer than 600 lumens, in which case partially shielded fixtures may be permitted.
- ii. All lighting must be extinguished no later than 10pm unless required for safety or active use.
- iii. Lighting plans must be prepared and provided for any new Development Applications that will lead to the development of new external lighting (public or private), this includes land division applications which require street lighting and commercial or residential developments where lighting is proposed (for example, in car park areas, or around buildings). Outdoor lighting plans shall be assessed against lighting principles in the 'International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)', as well as relevant industry and Australian Standards. To the extent that this Policy can require, those costs are to be borne by the developer.
- iv. Any private building application which proposes building a structure which has a footprint over 12m<sup>2</sup> and is proposed to be built inside a dark sky community must pay a Dark Sky Compliance Contribution if approved. The fee shall be transferred into a budget whose sole use will be to upgrade the existing infrastructure in dark sky communities to be compliant with the dark sky policy, unless given written consent by the GM to use the funds for other purposes.

**d. Existing Infrastructure**

- i. Non-compliant public lighting within a designated Dark Sky Community shall be replaced or retrofitted within 5 years of the date of designation, or sooner where practicable.
- ii. Council recognises that existing luminaires and public lighting infrastructure may not meet the requirements for lighting under the 'International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines (June 2018)'. In these cases, Council will work with communities seeking Dark Sky accreditation to prepare a lighting replacement plan to ensure public lighting conforms with Dark Sky Standards (as well as current Australian Standards). These works are to be funded or co-funded by the relevant community interest group who puts forward the request / application for accreditation.
- iii. The Northern Midlands Council commits to ensuring Dark Sky appropriate lighting will be designed and located accordingly when renewing or upgrading Council owned lighting within an area which has sought (or has received) accreditation.

**e. Outdoor Recreational and/or Athletic Field Lighting**

- i. To the extent to which this can be controlled through Legislation, Regulation or through Council's own projects, Outdoor Recreational and/or Athletic Field Lighting may be exempted from the strict shielding and short-wavelength emission requirements above provided all the following conditions are met:
  - 1. Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) lighting guidelines (RP-6) are followed according to the appropriate class of play.

2. Field lighting is provided exclusively for illumination of the surface of play and viewing stands, and not for any other applications.
3. Illuminance levels must be adjustable based on the task (e.g. active play vs. field maintenance).
4. Off-site impacts of the lighting will be limited to the greatest practical extent possible.
5. A strict curfew requirement (e.g. lights must be extinguished by 10pm/2200h or one hour after the end of play, whichever is the later) is observed.
6. Timers must be installed to prevent lights being left on accidentally overnight by automatically extinguishing them.
7. All sports lighting installations must utilise luminaires with zero uplight (U0).

## **6. Illuminated Signs**

- i. Restrictions on the installation and operation of illuminated signs:
  1. Luminance of externally or internally illuminated signs shall not exceed 150 cd/m<sup>2</sup> at night.
  2. All signs shall be extinguished no later than 10pm or the close of business, whichever is earlier.
  3. The luminous/illuminated surface area of an individual sign shall not exceed 18.6 square metres

## **7. Restricted Lighting**

- i. Lighting with a correlated colour temperature above 3000K is prohibited within Dark Sky Communities.
- ii. To the extent to which this can be controlled through Legislation, Regulation, or through Council's own projects, the following lighting is to be restricted or prohibited within areas covered under this policy, unless a motion is passed through council allowing such
  1. The use of searchlights, except when used by emergency personnel.
  2. Lighting on advertisement signage is prohibited, except where this meets the above requirements.

**Further Information**

This policy will be available for inspection at the Council office listed below during ordinary business hours and provided to interested parties as per Council's Fees and Charges Register. Copies are available to be downloaded, free of charge, from Council's website:

<https://www.northernmidlands.tas.gov.au/>

**Northern Midlands Council**

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Longford

Tasmania 7301

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Office hours: Monday to Friday, 8.45am to 4.30pm (except public holidays)

**Grievances**

Any grievances in relation to this policy or its application should be forwarded in writing addressed to the General Manager.

**Review Cycle**

This document is subject to review in two (2) years from the date of adoption or more frequently if legislation, accreditation or Council requires.

**Document History**

| Date | Version | Council Resolution No. | Description of changes |
|------|---------|------------------------|------------------------|
|      |         |                        |                        |
|      |         |                        |                        |
|      |         |                        |                        |

## **INTERNATIONAL DARK-SKY ASSOCIATION**

5049 E Broadway Blvd, Suite 105 - Tucson, AZ 85711-3646 USA - +1 520-293-3198 - [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)

*TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE NIGHTTIME ENVIRONMENT AND OUR HERITAGE OF DARK SKIES THROUGH  
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR LIGHTING*



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INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITIES

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## **International Dark Sky Community Program Guidelines**

**June 2018**

International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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**DEFINITION OF AN INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY COMMUNITY**

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An International Dark Sky Community (IDSC) is town, city, municipality or other similar political entity that has shown exceptional dedication to the preservation of the night sky through the implementation and enforcement of quality lighting policies, dark-sky education, and citizen support of the ideal of dark skies.

**GOALS FOR IDSC CREATION**

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- To identify communities with exceptional commitment to and success in pursuing dark sky preservation and restoration, and their promotion of quality outdoor lighting
- To promote improved outdoor nighttime quality of life for residents and visitors
- To support protection of human health, nocturnal habitats, public enjoyment of the night sky and its heritage, and/or areas ideal for professional and amateur astronomy
- To provide local, national, and international recognition for such communities
- To promote the ideals of the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) by encouraging communities to identify dark skies as a valuable community asset and aspiration

**DESIGNATION BENEFITS**

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Achieving this designation brings recognition of the efforts made by the Community government, residents, and public and private organizations to protect the night sky and the nocturnal environment dependent on it. The IDSC designation enhances awareness of dark-sky matters on the part of Community residents and visitors.

Designation as an IDSC entitles the Community to display the International Dark Sky Community logo in official publications, promotions, signs at entrances or within the Community, and retain the use of this logo by other groups within the Community when identifying the area itself<sup>1</sup>. IDA will promote and highlight ongoing Community ef-

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, a Community can identify itself as “*Flagstaff, the world’s first IDA Dark Sky Community*” or other words to the same effect, or an organization within the Community can state “*located in Flagstaff, an IDA Dark Sky Community*”.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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forts to protect night skies, and will maintain pages identifying and describing all IDSCs on its website.

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## ELIGIBILITY

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The Community must have some type of legal organization that is officially recognized by outside groups. This can be in the form of a town, city, municipality, or other legally organized community (such as urban neighborhoods and subdivisions), but need not be an incorporated entity. Unincorporated or otherwise informally organized communities are eligible for IDSC status if their governing jurisdictions enact public policy consistent with the requirements of “Minimum Requirements For All Communities” (below) that are legally binding in at least the territory of the Community.

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## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL COMMUNITIES

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- 1) A quality comprehensive lighting policy like the IDA/IES Model Lighting Ordinance<sup>2</sup> (MLO) that includes all of the following minimum standards for permanent lighting installations<sup>3,4</sup>:
  - A) Full shielding<sup>5</sup> of all lighting fixtures over 1000 initial lamp lumens<sup>6</sup>
  - B) A limit on the emission of short-wavelength light through one of the following restrictions:
    - i) The correlated color temperature (CCT) of lamps must not exceed 3000 Kelvins; **OR**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.darksky.org/our-work/public-policy/mlo/>

<sup>3</sup> More information on developing a lighting policy may be found on the IDA website.

<sup>4</sup> Lighting required by law under the authority of any legal jurisdiction higher than that of the Community may be formally exempted from the requirements of this section.

<sup>5</sup> “Fully shielded” is defined as a light source screened and its light directed in such a way that none is emitted above the horizontal plane passing through its lowest light-emitting part.

<sup>6</sup> “Initial lamp lumens” is defined as the number of lumens of light emitted by a lamp when new and not counting any depreciation of output due to the age of the lamp. This information can be found in manufacturer data sheets.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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- ii) Allowed lighting must not emit more than 25% of its total spectral power at wavelengths < 550 nanometers; **OR**
- iii) The scotopic-to-photopic (S/P) ratio of allowed lighting must not exceed 1.3
- C) A restriction on the total amount of unshielded lighting, such as a limit on lumens per net acre or a total site lumen allowance in unshielded fixtures (or equivalent wattages)
- D) A policy to address over-lighting, such as lumens per net acre caps (irrespective of shielding state) or maximum illuminance specifications
- E) Regulations of new installations of publicly-owned outdoor lighting:
  - i) A provision that clearly indicates where, when, and under what circumstances new publicly owned outdoor lighting, including street lighting, is warranted and will be permitted; **AND**
  - ii) A provision that requires that adaptive controls<sup>7</sup> and/or curfews<sup>8</sup> be employed in all future installations of public outdoor lighting
- F) Restrictions on the installation and operation of illuminated signs<sup>9</sup>:
  - i) Luminance levels for operation between sunset and sunrise shall not exceed 100 nits (100 candelas per square meter) as measured under conditions of a full white display; **AND**
  - ii) Sign illumination shall be extinguished completely one (1) hour after sunset, and remain off until one (1) hour before sunrise; **AND**

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<sup>7</sup> “Adaptive controls” is defined as devices such as timers, motion-sensors, and light-sensitive switches used to actively regulate the emission of light from light fixtures.

<sup>8</sup> “Curfew” is defined as a period of time at night during which lighting must be significantly dimmed in output or extinguished in accordance with an expected decrease in human presence.

<sup>9</sup> “Illuminated sign” is defined as any informational or advertising sign that is illuminated by either internal or external means. Descriptive terms are adjusted here accordingly according to the type of illumination.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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- iii) The luminous/illuminated surface area of an individual sign shall not exceed 200 square feet (18.6 square meters)
  - G) Outdoor recreational and/or athletic field lighting may be exempted from the strict shielding and short-wavelength emission requirements above provided that all of the following conditions are met:
    - i) Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) lighting guidelines (RP-6) are followed according to the appropriate class of play
    - ii) Field lighting is provided exclusively for illumination of the surface of play and viewing stands, and not for any other applications
    - iii) Illuminance levels must be adjustable based on the task (e.g., active play vs. field maintenance)
    - iv) Off-site impacts of the lighting will be limited to the greatest practical extent possible
    - v) A strict curfew requirement (e.g., lights must be extinguished by 10pm/2200h or one hour after the end of play, whichever is later) is observed
    - vi) Timers must be installed to prevent lights being left on accidentally overnight by automatically extinguishing them
  - H) Affects an amortization period, applicable to **ALL** publicly **AND** privately owned lighting, to end not more than ten (10) years from the effective date of the outdoor lighting policy, after which all non-conforming lighting extant at the time of enactment must be brought into compliance with the policy.
- 2) Community commitment to dark skies and quality lighting as shown by:
- A) City owned lighting conforming with, or committed to conforming with, the lighting policy (if the latter, a detailed plan with a timeline for completion in no more than five (5) years), **AND**

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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- B) Municipal support of dark skies and quality lighting as demonstrated by city publications, flyers, public service announcements, funding of lighting upgrades, etc.
- 3) Broad support for dark skies from a wide range of community organizations such as chambers of commerce, local electrical utilities, IDA chapters, lighting retailers, homeowners associations, and others.
- 4) Community commitment to dark skies and education as shown by at least one of the following:
  - A) Planning and execution of at least two (2) community dark sky awareness events<sup>10</sup> per year. This may be organized through a local astronomy club, municipality, school, etc.
  - B) Inclusion of dark sky awareness documents (IDA brochures or Community-created brochures) with other Community informational documents for residents and visitors.
  - C) Inclusion of dark sky education in Community schools and curriculum.
- 5) Success in light pollution control as demonstrated by at least one of the following:
  - A) Examples of a number of construction projects appropriate to the Community population and amount of new construction and renovation activity, built under the lighting policy and demonstrating its effective application
  - B) Alternative evidence of success in light pollution control, to be discussed with the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager for compliance.
- 6) A sky brightness measurement program must be established and maintained either by the Community or by a public or private entity (e.g., university, research center, IDA chapter, astronomy club, etc.) to follow the evolution of light pollution in the IDSC. Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to submit their measurements

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<sup>10</sup> Note that astronomy education events such as star parties do NOT qualify as “community dark sky awareness events” unless the presentation explicitly includes a message relating to dark skies and outdoor lighting.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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to the citizen science projects such as My Sky At Night ([myskyatnight.com](https://myskyatnight.com)) and Globe At Night ([globeatnight.org](https://globeatnight.org)).

- 7) Once established, the Community must erect and maintain appropriate signage indicating the International Dark Sky Community designation along a roadway entrance, along a footpath entrance if no roadway exists, a public gathering place such as a square or common, or at a municipal government center such as a city or town hall. If approved by IDA, language as an alternative to “International Dark Sky Community” may appear on the signage and in Community communications regarding the IDSC status. Once the sign is erected, a photograph documenting it must be taken and sent to IDA along with a description of its location.

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### PROVISIONAL STATUS

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In some cases, a Community interested in the program may lack all of the resources required to achieve a designation outright. If resource unavailability otherwise hinders the progress of a Community’s application, that Community may apply for and be granted Provisional status at the discretion of the IDA Board of Directors. Provisional status recognizes the Community’s ongoing work to become an International Dark Sky Community and is intended as a leverage point to successfully enable actions such as lighting upgrades/retrofits.

Provisional status expires after three (3) years. At any time before the end of this period, a Community may reapply for full status. Material submitted for the removal of Provisional status may be an addendum to the initial application as long as the material includes a current assessment of the goals, outreach efforts, and lighting policy listed in the original application and clearly demonstrates that any program requirements left unmet at receipt of the Provisional status have been satisfied.

To be considered for Provisional status, send a nomination package to IDA that includes all of the following information:

- 1) Documented intent to create and support an IDA Dark Sky Community
- 2) An enacted and legally effective outdoor lighting policy, and summary of outreach efforts to date
- 3) A description of the circumstances that currently prevent the Community from meeting the minimum Dark Sky Community requirements
- 4) An action plan describing steps the aspiring Community will take to meet all program requirements in the specified Provisional status period

International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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**IDSC APPLICATION PROCESS**

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**NOMINATION**

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The nomination may be initiated by an IDA qualified nominator<sup>11</sup> who has personally reviewed a Community's outdoor lighting and commitment to night sky preservation. Nominators are encouraged to correspond with IDA staff and the Community throughout this process. In addition, the application must include evidence, such as in the form of a letter of support, from the Community government (mayor, council, etc.) consenting to the nomination for IDSC status.

**STEPS FOR APPLICANT**

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1. Make initial contact with IDA by phone or email to discuss the process and receive recommendations, followed by continued communications to update IDA staff on progress and receive continued assistance.
2. Designate a formal point of contact (POC) person, such as a project manager, and provide their telephone number, address and email address to IDA staff. Before and after designation, any changes to this POC, or their information, must be communicated to IDA immediately in order to ensure accurate communication at all times.
3. Obtain a letter of nomination from a qualified IDA member nominator, as well as a supporting letter from elected representatives of the Community, such as the mayor and/or council of a municipality. Solicit additional letters of support from Community organizations, clubs, groups, universities, etc.
4. Upon completion, send the application to IDA staff for review of the document at least one month before the chosen submission deadline date. IDA staff will confirm that the application is complete and ready for submission or return it with suggestions for improvements.
5. Submit the final application packet electronically in PDF and/or Microsoft Word (.doc) format to IDA staff for formal review. Submit in plenty of time for IDA staff

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<sup>11</sup> An "IDA qualified nominator" is defined here as an individual or organization holding an IDA membership in good standing at the time that the IDSC application is submitted. The Community itself may join IDA as an organizational member and self-nominate.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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to review and prepare your application to make the bi-monthly deadline that you prefer, as found on the IDA website. Requests to rush applications will **NOT** be honored; planning ahead is essential if the Community wishes to meet a specific deadline.

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**TO BE INCLUDED IN IDSC APPLICATION PACKAGE**


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1. Map of the Community clearly indicating its legal boundaries, and basic factual information about the Community
2. Letter of nomination support by IDA qualified nominator and elected representatives of the Community such as the mayor and/or council
3. The Community's lighting policy, meeting the minimum requirements as stated in the "Minimum Requirements For All Communities" section
4. Documentation of examples of Community commitment and construction/renovation projects demonstrating effective application of the lighting policy
5. Proposed alternative wording for a IDSC (e.g. Dark Sky Village, Starry Sky City, etc.), if desired, with a justification for the request

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**IDA REVIEW PROCESS**


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Six (6) application submission deadlines occur in each calendar year, commencing in January and continuing every other month. Before the Community's final application is submitted, it is highly recommended that the Community be in regular communication with the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager to perfect the application by the next application deadline.

The International Dark Sky Places Manager will forward applications to the IDA Dark Sky Places Committee (DSPC) for review. DSPC review lags the submission dates by one two-month cycle. The total elapsed time between deadline and final IDSC designation approval is approximately ten (10) weeks.

Endorsement of applications by the DSPC is by a 2/3 supermajority vote; otherwise, the DSPC will return applications with reasons for denial of an endorsement and specific recommendations for improvement. If endorsed, the applicants will be notified and the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager will present the application to the IDA Board of Directors (BOD) for final review and approval. A ten (10)-calendar-day

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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waiting period then commences during which the Board of Directors has the right to deny IDSC status should it determine that any problems with the application exist.

If the BOD registers no objection within the ten-calendar-day waiting period, the IDSC designation is considered immediately awarded by IDA. The Community has the right to choose when the designation is made public, but it must organize the announcement to be made at the same time as the IDA public notice unless otherwise agreed by both parties. Along with the announcement notice, IDA will publish the Community's application on its website; by submitting the application, the Community acknowledges in advance that the application will be made publicly available. If an application is denied final approval by the IDA BOD, a letter will be sent to the applicant outlining elements of the application that need improvement along with specific recommendations for ways to remedy any problems the BOD identifies. Applications may be resubmitted for future consideration after remediation is complete. Resubmitted applications will be considered without prejudice.

IDA realizes that certain circumstances surrounding an IDSC application may cause some potential authors of letters of support (or opposition) to feel uneasy about publicly declaring their opinions about the IDA designation. In the interest of providing the DSPC with as full a picture of Community sentiment about applications as possible, certain letters may be suppressed from online publication if it is felt that making the letters publicly available will subject their authors to retaliation or harassment. A prospective IDSC seeking this protection for letter-writers must make a formal written request. The International Dark Sky Places Program Manager must approve suppression of publication of any part of an application. Note that suppression of online publication does not prevent either the DSPC or the IDA BOD from reading all submitted letters.

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## POST-DESIGNATION REVIEW AND MAINTENANCE

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**The IDSC designation is not awarded in perpetuity.** Rather, it is subject to regular review by IDA and possible revocation if the minimum program requirements are not maintained. More details may be found in the "Reassessment of IDSC designation" section below.

To ensure that Communities remain exemplary in their protection and restoration of natural nighttime darkness, IDA will periodically reevaluate each site in the International Dark Sky Places Program. This is done to confirm that the Community continues to meet the minimum requirements and is making adequate progress toward LMP compliance goals outlined in this document.

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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Each designated IDSC must submit to IDA a written report of its activities related to the maintenance of its designation on or before 1 October of each calendar year. The report is a short (typically less than ten-page) synopsis of the Community's activities and initiatives during the intervening year<sup>12</sup>. The report should include dates and brief descriptions of any interpretive events, lighting retrofit projects, outreach efforts, etc. Samples of printed materials and press articles should also be included, if available.

Annual reports should not be burdensome to produce, as they are intended as a compilation of information accumulated throughout the year. Annual reports and supporting documentation must be submitted electronically to the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager in either PDF or Microsoft Word format. If the annual report is not received by IDA in a timely fashion, IDA may suspend the site's IDSC status until the annual reporting requirement has been met (see the following section). On or about 1 August and 1 September of each year, the International Dark Sky Places Program Manager will remind local contacts at each IDSC of the pending 1 October annual report submission deadline.

A designated IDSC is exempt from the annual reporting requirement in the calendar year in which the IDA designation was awarded. If the designation is received after 1 October of a given calendar year, the IDSC's first annual report to IDA will be due on 1 October of the following calendar year.

## REASSESSMENT OF IDSC DESIGNATIONS

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From time to time, IDA receives comments from visitors to Communities that raise concerns about the veracity and timeliness of information provided to IDA by site administrators. IDA may, at its discretion, investigate claims in which it is alleged that IDSCs are not adhering to commitments made to IDA and to the public in their applications to the Program. This section details the IDA procedure for carrying out such investigations, and the rights of IDSCs in such matters.

An allegation of impropriety concerning any of the elements of participation in the Program outlined in this document is subject to IDA investigation and potential remedial action including temporary suspension and/or permanent revocation of the IDSC designation. IDA staff shall perform due diligence in gathering facts concerning such allegations it deems credible, and will prepare a report of its findings for consideration by the DSPC. The DSPC commits to weighing the evidence fairly and impartially, and to

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<sup>12</sup> Examples of acceptable annual reports are available on the individual IDSC pages on the IDA website.

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### International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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seek to resolve disputes whenever possible through dialog. A Community subject to an investigation shall be notified in a timely manner and solicited for evidence contrary to the specifics of the allegation at hand. The Community will be given an opportunity to correct any deficiencies with regard to the Program guidelines established by the IDA investigation within a reasonable time period to be prescribed by the DSPC.

Failure to achieve consensus through these means risks a DSPC recommendation for suspension or revocation of the IDSC designation. If made, such a recommendation will be forwarded to the IDA Board of Directors for formal ratification before coming into force. The Board's decision on any disciplinary matters involving an IDSC shall be considered definitive and binding.

Any IDSC so investigated has the right to review the allegations against it and all factual information collected by IDA pertinent to the allegations.

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### REINSTATEMENT FOLLOWING SUSPENSION

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If the DSPC recommends a suspension of a Community's IDSC designation and the Board ratifies the suspension, the Community administration shall be immediately notified. The status of a suspended IDSC shall be changed to "Provisional" in all IDA communications until the designation is reinstated or revoked; however, the process of obtaining reinstatement of a designation is not the same as that outlined in the "Provisional Status" section of these guidelines.

To obtain reinstatement of a suspended designation, the IDSC must provide evidence to the DSPC's satisfaction that the specific issues identified by the DSPC as grounds for the suspension have been corrected and that all Program guidelines are once again met. The DSPC will consider the evidence presented by the IDSC and render a judgment to either:

- Accept the reinstatement petition, **OR**
- Reject the petition and recommend revocation, **OR**
- Return the petition with further instructions and a defined deadline for a IDSC response.

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### REVOCATION

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A suspension left unresolved after one (1) year from the date of the Board's assent to the suspension automatically becomes a permanent revocation. Revocation entails removal of the IDSC from IDA's roll of approved International Dark Sky Places, and from mention on the IDA website and in member and external communications. IDA reserves the right to take legal action against any former IDSC whose designation is duly revoked but continues to use the IDA name/logo in advertising, communications,

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International Dark Sky Community Designation Guidelines

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and/or signage.

# ROSS: DARK SKY COMMUNITY

# RECAP

Aligns with Council strategies and policies (p4)

Competition, but Ross / NMC ahead of the game

Economic potential of Dark Sky and Astrotourism (p5)

Supported by Council, Ross businesses and community (p6 - 14)

Considerable media interest (p15 – 20)

Commitment to at least two DS events per year (p21 – 23)

Draft application lodged for comment:

“Lighting Management Plan required”

# LIGHTING MANAGEMENT PLAN

A Lighting Management Plan:

- Defines standards for new lighting
- Sets timetable for upgrade of non-compliant existing lighting
- Five years to comply from year of accreditation

The Lighting Management Plan applies to:

Public lighting – streetlights, public buildings and floodlights (p29 – 31)

- 54 Streetlights in Ross
- Owned and managed by TasNetworks
- Paid for by Council

Floodlights (p32 – 33)

- Ross Bridge
- Cenotaph

# DARK SKY REQUIREMENTS

Streetlights / public porch lights:

- 'Warm' light less than 3000K
- Fully shielded - no light emitted upwards
- Fitted with timers where possible

Floodlights (Ross Bridge / Cenotaph):

- Less than 1000 lumens
- Fitted with timers

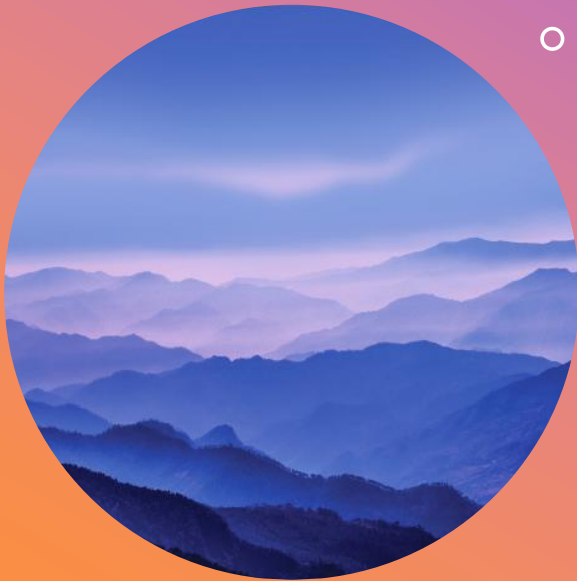
# PROPOSAL

Pass the Lighting Management Policy (p34 – 40)

Implement LMP with a smart-lighting trial in Ross:

- All lights replaced now
- Smart-light replacements with timers and 3G
- NMC saves on electricity
- TasNetworks saves on maintenance
- Subsequent roll-out statewide

# THANK YOU





## 11 PLANNING REPORTS

### 11.1 DRAFT AMENDMENT 24-2026: ROSS DARK SKY SPECIFIC AREA PLAN

*File:* PLN26-0081  
*Responsible Officer:* Maree Bricknell, Acting General Manager  
*Report prepared by:* Paul Godier, Senior Planner

#### MINUTE NO. 26/0159

##### DECISION

Cr McCullagh/Cr Andrews  
That Council:

1. under section 40D(b) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, agree to prepare draft amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule, as set out below; and
2. under section 40F(1) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, consider and endorse the Assessment Against LPS Criteria attached to this report; and
3. under section 40F(2)(a) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, certify draft amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule as meeting the LPS criteria.

#### Draft Amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule

Insert NOR-S9.0 Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan in accordance with Attachment 1.

Carried Unanimously

##### Voting for the Motion:

Mayor Knowles, Deputy Mayor Lambert, Cr Adams, Cr Andrews, Cr Archer, Cr Brooks, Cr Goss, Cr McCullagh and Cr Terrett

##### Voting Against the Motion:

Nil

#### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. under section 40D(b) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, agree to prepare draft amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule, as set out below; and
2. under section 40F(1) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, consider and endorse the Assessment Against LPS Criteria attached to this report; and
3. under section 40F(2)(a) of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, certify draft amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule as meeting the LPS criteria.

#### Draft Amendment 24-2026 to the Northern Midlands Local Provisions Schedule

Insert NOR-S9.0 Ross Dark Sky Specific Area Plan in accordance with Attachment 1.