Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park Report to IDA, 1 October 2017

Submitted by Fred Watson
Chair, Siding Spring Observatory Dark Sky Committee
IDA Contact, Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park Working Group

1. General
Following the recognition of the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park (WDSP) by IDA and the subsequent public announcement on 4 July 2016, a Working Group was set up to coordinate the activities of the two major stakeholders in the Park. They are the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), owners and operators of the Park, and the adjacent Siding Spring Observatory (SSO). Working Group membership consists of:

Jessica Stokes (NPWS Strategic Programs Officer) (Chair),
Rebecca Cass (NPWS Ranger, Acting Area Manager),
Louise Clifton (NPWS Zone Team Leader Country Inland)
Brad Condon (ANU Site Operations Manager, SSO),
Doug Gray (AAO Ops Manager, SSO),
Fred Watson (AAO Head of Environment of Lighting, SSO) (IDA Contact)

In addition, from September 2017, the services of Marnie Ogg of TravelOgg Pty Ltd. in advising on commercial outreach opportunities in relation to the WDSP have been secured. Marnie was the initiator and coordinator of the original IDA application for the WDSP.

Immediately after its formation, a number of circumstances conspired to interrupt the activities of the Working Group. A major restructuring within the NPWS resulted in the loss of the then Area Manager, Mark Fosdick (who served on the original WDSP submission committee), and continues to challenge the contributions of other NPWS Working Group members. A proposal to formally open the park in April 2017 was postponed by NPWS primarily on the grounds that significant media coverage had already been secured following the announcement of the Park, and also that a parallel endeavour by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) enacting new Dark Sky legislation in August 2016 had received significant media coverage (see http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Environment-and-Heritage/Dark-Sky-Planning.) This legislation is described further in Section 3.

It was also recognised that two further significant opportunities would present themselves in 2018. The first of these is the opening of the Warrumbungle National Park’s new Visitor Centre. This is a replacement facility for the one lost on 13 January 2013, when the disastrous Wambelong bushfire destroyed 54,000 hectares of National Park and surrounding private property, including many homes and farm buildings. The Siding Spring Lodge and Fire Station were also burnt down, although none of the Observatory’s telescopes were damaged. The new Park Visitor Centre is located on the site of the old one, and is currently under construction. The new building will feature sky-friendly lighting throughout, with input from the WDSP Working Group.
A further opportunity for the Park opening will occur when the second phase of the WDSP is introduced. An IDA application to extend the WDSP to include Siding Spring Observatory was mandated by the NPWS as a condition for its support in the original application. An email from Dr John Barentine in November 2016 outlined the steps necessary to fulfil the IDA’s requirements. Meeting the lighting requirements is straightforward, given that the new area is the precinct of Australia’s national optical observatory. The delay in submitting the application for extension has been largely administrative, with the legal implications for the Australian National University (which owns and operates the site) remaining an outstanding issue. Progress is being made, however, and it is expected that the IDA will receive a submission regarding the extension before the end of 2017.

2. Park Visitation and Visitor Education
The Warrumbungle National Park attracted some 35,000 visitors during the financial year 2016-17, and the majority of those would have been aware of the Park’s Dark Sky status. All campers in the Park are given information relating to lighting within the WDSP. (Most visitors to the National Park also visit the adjacent Siding Spring Observatory, where the WDSP features prominently in the Visitor Centre’s displays and publicity handouts.)

Examples of recent publicity material for visitors to the Warrumbungle National Park are appended to this report, including an A4 handout leaflet, the handout table of camping fees, an A4 poster designed for doors in the camping area amenities blocks and toilets, and the draft design for a new interpretive sign (in which the final version will include more substantive WDSP information, including the IDA logo). Dark Sky signage within the Warrumbungle National Park is still a work in progress, but will be finalised along with signage at the new Park Visitor Centre.

The outline design for a new interactive Dark Sky display to be located within the new National Park Visitor Centre is also appended.

While the Dark Sky status of the Warrumbungle National Park is featured on the NPWS website [https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/warrumbungle-national-park](https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/warrumbungle-national-park), a higher level of visibility is on the private website [http://www.warrumbungledarkskypark.org/](http://www.warrumbungledarkskypark.org/) Once Siding Spring Observatory is incorporated into the WDSP, there will be a rationalisation of the websites which is likely to result in greater internet visibility.

3. Lighting
Since the original IDA application for the WDSP was submitted, no new lighting infrastructure has been installed. The next major lighting upgrade within the existing WDSP boundary will be when the new Visitor Centre is completed, as mentioned in Section 1 above.

The legislative framework governing outdoor lighting in the area has been strengthened since the submission of the original IDA application for the WDSP. The legislative protection of SSO’s dark sky is the responsibility of both state and local government, with the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) providing the overarching structure. In August 2016, the old Orana Regional Environmental Plan No. 1 was replaced by three new legal instruments, which apply
to the surrounding local government administrations (Coonamble Shire Council, Gilgandra Shire Council, Warrumbungle Shire Council, and Dubbo Regional Council:


In addition, the DPE (in consultation with the SSO Dark Sky Committee) prepared a Dark Sky Planning Guideline to explain the new legislation. This can be downloaded from: http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/~media/Files/DPE/Guidelines/dark-sky-planning-guideline-2016-06.ashx

All new lighting installations within the surrounding local government areas, whether domestic or commercial, are required to adhere to the Guideline, and are vetted by the local government administrations and, in certain cases, by the SSO Dark Sky Committee.

On the broader national front, two long-established Australian/NZ Standards (AS 4282 and AS/NZS 1158) deal respectively with the effects of obtrusive lighting and the lighting of roads and public spaces. Currently, they do not include the damaging effects of upward light-spill, but the appropriate Standards Committees (LG-010 and LG-002) have been recalled with an agenda that includes strengthening them in that regard. There is representation on the Standards Committees by both the Astronomical Society of Australia and the SSO Dark Sky Committee, and a draft version of the revised AS 4282 is currently being circulated among committee members. The content in regard to the reduction of light pollution is now very much improved.

One outstanding lighting issue that was foreshadowed in the original IDA application for the WDSP is the use of non-compliant camping lights by Park visitors. Despite the visitor information mentioned in Section 2 (which will soon be further strengthened with information on the NPWS website), campers are generally unprepared for the strict lighting compliance expected within the WDSP. In times of high visitation, they can easily forget that their lights are expected to be shielded. The SSO Dark Sky Committee has approached a leading camping light manufacturer to develop sky-friendly fixtures for use with caravans and tents, with fully-shielded luminaires and low CCT LEDs. We are optimistic that eventually this will lead to some progress on this front.

4. Sky Quality
The night sky brightness at the 3.9-m Anglo-Australian Telescope (located adjacent to the WDSP’s eastern boundary) is constantly monitored. This is carried out with a Unihedron Sky Quality Meter (SQM-LR - serial port interface) mounted near the telescope. It points slightly south of the zenith and records data during the night once per minute. The results are presented at http://site.aao.gov.au/AATdatabase/met.html, which also includes meteorological data and sky camera images.
The AAT SQM output on clear, moonless nights with no planetary or Milky Way interference typically bottoms out at 22.02 mag/sq.arcsec. That reading is through the glass cover of its weatherproof housing, so 0.11 mag needs to be removed, which means its true value is 21.9 mag/sq.arcsec.

5. Collaboration with Macquarie University
As well as the real-time night-sky brightness measurements on the AAT website mentioned above, the SSO Dark Sky Committee is collaborating with Macquarie University on publicly accessible night sky brightness measurements from both Siding Spring (ANU 2.3-m telescope) and the Macquarie University campus in Sydney. Some of the preliminary work carried out on this in 2016 can be found at http://web.science.mq.edu.au/~sqm/

Another initiative being carried forward with Macquarie University (in collaboration with the SSO Dark Sky Committee and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage) is a schools citizen science project designed to raise awareness of light pollution, particularly in the Dark Sky Region within 200 km of Siding Spring. In April 2017, a pilot project took place within four high schools in the district around the WDSP, in close collaboration with the Environmental Education Centre (EEC) in the Park (see http://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/things-to-do/education-centres/warrumbungle-environmental-education-centre).

Sky Quality Meters for measuring night sky brightness were provided to these schools and the EEC, allowing students to learn about light pollution and its broader environmental impacts. As in the previous year, final-year astronomy undergraduates from Macquarie were involved, as part of the University’s PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) programme. The initiative to engage students in the dark sky initiative under the PACE programme is now continuing into a third year.

6. Media Relations
Since the announcement of the IDA recognition of the WDSP last year, the park has received extensive media coverage. The WDSP Working Group Chair, Jessica Stokes, had a number of media interviews concerning the Park in celebration of Earth Hour on 25 March 2017, and NPWS conducted a social media campaign highlighting it.

Further important examples are:

Al Jazeera TV news item on the Park (2 Feb 2017):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tCvir74OK8A


The WDSP featured in the BBC and ABC TV productions of ‘Stargazing Live’ from Siding Spring Observatory in March/April 2017. Average audiences in the UK over the 3-night series were in the region of 2 million, while the subsequent 3-night ABC production averaged some 750,000 viewers in Australia.

Finally, two extracts from the Coonabarabran Times issued shortly after the announcement of the WDSP are appended to this report.

7. Community Outreach
The WDSP featured at the Dubbo Regional Sustainability Expo (2 Sep 2017) and the Siding Spring Observatory Open Day (30 Sep 2017), with associated brochure campaigns. The photo on the next page shows visitors to the WDSP stand in the Anglo-Australian Telescope dome at the Open Day.

There are currently 274 followers on the @darkskyaus twitter site, and 306 tweets have been issued to date.

The Bart Bok lecture is presented annually in Coonabarabran to highlight the importance of the district’s dark skies to science and tourism, and typically attracts 200 to 300 members of the public. The WDSP was promoted at the two most recent lectures, on 2 Oct 2016 (given by Dr Amanda Bauer, then of AAO) and 1 Oct 2017 (given by Prof Matthew Colless of ANU).

Fred Watson has presented outreach talks on good lighting featuring the WDSP at Macquarie University (May 2016), the 2nd Australia-Spain Research Forum (Dec 2016), the SPARC/FMA International Lighting and Facilities Event (May 2017), The Star-Stuff Festival of the Cosmos (June 2017) and the Australian Smart Lighting Summit (Sep 2017).

Since March 2017 (in commemoration of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism), the Sydney Observatory has promoted the Lost in Light video (https://vimeo.com/178841667) in relation to the WDSP, with the aim of producing an Australian version of the video.
Visitors to the WDSP stand in the Anglo-Australian Telescope dome, 30 Sep 2017.
Known as the ‘Astronomy Capital of Australia’ Coonabarabran and Warrumbungle National Park are the ultimate places to see the splendour of the stars.

Warrumbungle National Park has now been declared Australia’s first Dark Sky Park, protecting the night sky into the future. Spend the night and soak in the stars.

**INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PLACES**

The Dark Sky Places Program was started by the International Dark Sky Association in 2001 to encourage communities around the world to preserve and protect dark sites through responsible lighting policies and public education. Astronomers were becoming alarmed at the degradation of the night sky by light pollution.

International Dark Sky Parks are publically or privately owned spaces that have exceptional starry nights and a protected nightscape. The parks implement good outdoor lighting policies, rehabilitate poor quality outdoor lighting and provide dark sky education programs for visitors.

In 2016 Warrumbungle National Park became the 41st International Dark Sky Park and the first in the southern hemisphere. As a national park it is already protected from development. This, and the distance from major cities and its location next to the Siding Spring Observatory has qualified the park for Gold Tier status.

**TAKING BACK THE NIGHT**

The Warrumbungle National Park is managed to protect International Dark Sky Park values.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has moved to reduce light pollution within the park.

- Lighting has been modified to ensure that it faces downwards. Lights have been fitted with shields and upward facing lights have been replaced or disconnected.
- Lights in public areas are placed on a timer to minimise the length of their use.
- There will be no street lighting within the Dark Sky Park.

Surrounding shires are participating and currently comply with planning requirements of the NSW Dark Sky Region, which have strict lighting controls across the landscape. Changing street lighting will help protect the dark sky and save councils money.

**COONABARABRAN’S OBSERVANT HISTORY**

In the 1950s, seeking relief from the light pollution of Canberra that negatively impacted its Mount Stromlo Observatory, the Australian government began looking for alternative sites. In 1962 Mount Woorut at Siding Spring was chosen as the best site. The site was chosen because of its high elevation, low humidity, clear air, exceptionally dark skies, and an average of 70% of cloud-free nights.

Now operated by the Research School of Astronomy & Astrophysics at the Australian National University, Siding Spring Observatory is home to the 4-meter telescope of the Australian Astronomical Observatory, the largest in Australia, and 30 other telescopes across the site.

Unlike its close neighbours, the radio telescopes at Parkes and Narrabri, Siding Spring houses optical telescopes.
WHAT IS LIGHT POLLUTION?

Light pollution is the negative effect of too much man-made light. Imagine living 300 years ago, before electric lights were invented. When you didn’t need your light you would extinguish your candle. Now we leave street and building lights on all night.

Sky glow – light that escapes upwards from unshielded lights or lights that are aimed upwards. It is what we call the brightening of the night sky over cities.

Light Trespass – uncontrolled light that spills onto other people’s property or where it is not wanted, e.g. into the neighbour’s house and yard.

Glare – too much bright light, often shining directly into our eyes and making it hard to see.

WHY IS LIGHT POLLUTION BAD?

Sky glow obscures our view of the night sky. Have you ever tried to look at the stars in a big city?

Light pollution wastes energy. Light pollution is South Australia alone costs over $5 million and produces more than 70,000 tons of carbon dioxide. Saving the greenhouse emissions from this light pollution would be the equivalent of taking 10,000 cars off the road.

Animals, including humans, need a regular interval of light and dark. Have you ever found it hard to get to sleep because the room was too bright? The loss of darkness inhibits the secretion of melatonin, the sleep inducing hormone, making it very difficult for us to sleep.

For many animals, a natural night sky signals when to eat, sleep, hunt, migrate and reproduce. It is estimated that half of all life starts their daily activity at sunset.

Light Pollution has been shown to disorient birds that hunt and migrate at night. They use natural light, such as the moon, to navigate. Search lights or building lights can confuse them and sent them in the wrong direction or cause them to collide with buildings.

Nocturnal hunters, such as threatened barking owls, become less effective as their specialist eyesight, that evolved to operate in the dark, becomes less effective. Other species are subjected to greater predation as they are unable to seek shelter under the cover of darkness.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP THE DARK SKY PARK?

• Turn off your lights whenever they are not needed
• Avoid using very bright lights
• Hang your lights under an awning
• Face your lights downward
• Get outside, look up and enjoy the stars

MORE INFORMATION

Warrumbungle National Park Visitor Centre
Open 9:00am–4:00pm daily
T: (02) 6825 4364
www.nationparks.nsw.gov.au
www.warrumbledarkskypark.org

Siding Spring Observatory
Open Tuesday–Friday 9:30am–4pm, Saturday 10am–4pm
T: (02) 6842 6211
www.sidingspringobservatory.com.au

WHAT IS GOOD LIGHTING?

Photos: Front page top and back page, Ángel R López-Sánchez. Front page bottom, Colin Whelan.
What can you do to help the Dark Sky Park?

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- Avoid using very bright lights
- Hang your lights under an awning
- Face your lights downward
- Look up and enjoy the stars
WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK CAMPING AND PARK USE FEES 2016
Effective from October 2016

CAMPING FEES

POWERED SITES
$12.00 per adult per night
$6.00 per school age child per night
Available at Camp Blackman only

UNPOWERED SITES
$6.50 per adult per night
$3.50 per school age child per night
(Includes Camp Blackman, Camp Wambelong, Camp Pincham and Walaay)

SCHOOL GROUPS (Camp Walaay)
$2.20 per student per day Camping

BALOR HUT (Walk in - base of the Breadknife)
$6.00 per adult per night
$3.50 per school age child
Bookings essential - sleeps eight (bedding required)

PACK CAMPING - Walk in back country camp sites.
No camping Fee
Register your trip intentions at Warrumbungle NP Visitor Centre

*** NO REFUNDS WILL BE GIVEN FOR CAMPING FEES ***

PARK USE FEE

PER VEHICLE
$8.00 per car per day or Annual National Park Pass
NSW Pensions entitled to exemption pass

BUSES: ORGANISED TOUR GROUPS
$3.30 per passenger per day

BUSES: COMMUNITY GROUPS (not on a tour)
$2.20 per passenger per day

ANNUAL NATIONAL PARK PASSES
$22.00 Single Country Park (ie. Warrumbungle)
$45.00 Country Park Pass (all country areas NSW)
$65.00 Multi Park (all NSW except Kosciuszko)
$190.00 All Park pass
Discounts available for Seniors Card holders

WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK IS AN INTERNATIONAL DARK SKY PARK

The darker the sky: the brighter the stars. What can you do to help?

🌟 Turn-off your lights whenever they are not needed
🌟 Avoid using very bright lights
🌟 Hang your lights under an awning
🌟 Face your lights downward
🌟 Look up and enjoy the stars
Dark sky interactive. A mechanical hood over a light is rotated via a dial. The audience can clearly see variations in light spill.
Panel: 1 x 600 (W) x 3050 (H) x 400 mm (D)

Technical requirements:
1 x double power point
Warrumbungles takes honour of first Dark Sky Park in southern hemisphere

Warrumbungle National Park has been declared Australia’s first Dark Sky Park, recognising and protecting its key role in astronomical research.

In what is envisaged as a boon for local tourism, the confirmation of the park’s new status by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) has been greeted with enthusiasm by Warrumbungle Shire Council’s CEO, astronomers and local tourism operators.

Australian Astronomical Observatory (AAO) head of Lighting and Environment, Professor Fred Watson, who spearheaded the nomination, said the area was already a dark site, so was an obvious candidate for Australia’s first IDA recognised “Dark Sky Park.”

“I am thrilled with the new Dark Sky status, which will give central western NSW the opportunity to educate and explain the benefits of dark skies and the use of sky-friendly lighting,” Professor Watson said.

The heritage-listed national park attracts over 50,000 bushwalkers, rock climbers, birdwatchers and nature-lovers from Australia and around the world annually, and it is expected that the Dark Sky declaration will lead to an influx of tourism in the area.

Upgraded resources: Steve Lebau, general manager of Warrumbungle Shire Council, said he was delighted with the announcement of the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park.

“The international travelling public is most impressed by your unspoiled darkness and dark sky quality, we welcome the opportunity to support astronomy tourists in the Warrumbungle Region,” Mr Lebau said.

The Warrumbungle Shire Council’s lighting policy that regulates the installation and use of lighting within an 8km-wide radius of the Australian Astronomical Observatory at Sideling Hill is now updated in state legislation, with the Department of Planning, resulting in a new State Environmental Planning Policy, otherwise known as a SEPP. This means that any development, including mining ventures, within a 200km radius of Sideling Hill needs to abide by the Dark Sky Planning Guidelines.

However, Mr Lebau said the guidelines are restrictive and serve to protect the observing conditions at Sideling Hill.

Marcia Oeg, manager of Sydney Observatory, who worked with Professor Watson on the dark sky submission, said the process was made “relatively easy” due to the very strong lighting policies already in place from surrounding shires. “The Warrumbungle National Park is the first Dark Sky Park in Australia. To be first is pretty significant,” Ms Oeg said.

This is a fantastic result for tourism and the night sky, in general.

A Dark Sky Park doesn’t mean no lighting, people still light up around the dark, it just shows how good current lighting can be, to not have the wastage of upward lighting.

People are fascinated to look at a dark sky, and the public can access the Warrumbungle 24 hours a day in safety.

Mr Oeg said the benefits to tourism at other Dark Sky Parks and Reserves throughout the world had been incredible.

“Nullarbor and Flinders Ranges, a major tourist attraction, where only 30% of the area is under an Australian astronomical reserve.

As recently communities grow, it is easier to have a plan in place to protect the park’s dark sky qualities from light pollution now and into the future.

Environmental benefits: Mr Speckman said the park’s status would benefit the environment as well as growers.

Enlightenment: binoculars and telescopes; keep lights low until 10pm. “No one would want to see our dark night sky,” Mr Speckman said.

Warrumbungle Shire Council mayor, Peter Shilling, said strong lighting policies had contributed to the success of the dark sky designation.

“Derkong” is a very special day for the residents of Warrumbungle Shire and the town of Coonabarabran.

Coonabarabran is ready to welcome all those interested in astronomy and star-gazing to the dark sky event.

The event will include a night sky experience, a dark sky party and a special ceremony to light the sky.

The night sky experience will include a star-gazing session, a talk on the night sky, and a special ceremony to light the sky.

The dark sky party will include a bonfire, marshmallows, and music from a local band.

The ceremony to light the sky will be a special event with a local artist creating a piece of art to celebrate the night sky.

This event is an opportunity to come together as a community and celebrate the beauty of the night sky.

For more information, please contact the Warrumbungle Shire Council on 02 6765 5000 or visit their website at www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au.

Warrumbungle National Park has been designated a Dark Sky Park, the first in Australia and the southern hemisphere.

For more information, please contact the Warrumbungle Shire Council on 02 6765 5000 or visit their website at www.warrumbungle.nsw.gov.au.
In the Library

By Officer in Charge of Coonabarabran Library, Gary Funnell

Winter Reading Programs

Macquarie Regional Library is giving you the chance to win an iPad Air the latest product from Apple with the empathy to be nearly everything you would want from a portable device. Our Winter Reading program couldn’t be a simpler grab an entry form or several from Coonabarabran Library, borrow books, audio books, magazines or download e-books, audio books and e-magazines from the library’s website, complete the entry form, which details what you’ve enjoyed from the library and print the complete form using brought CSR Macquarie Regional Library by 3pm, 29 July. The major prize draw Entries are limited to five per person, and items must be borrowed from Macquarie Regional Library. Already we have had dozens of completed entry forms given in, but there is still two weeks left to participate.

You receive overdue fees.

The exciting prog Kids drop in to the library on Monday, 4 July, is being celebrated by an

An evening with:

Jesse Blackadder
Sulari Gentilli and
Ellie Marney

Join the writers for dinner at BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Thursday, 21st July

6.30 to 7.00pm — $50 per head

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Hawaiian Heaven — $14.00

Tomato, Bacon, Pineapple, Ham, with Mozzerella

Pepperoni Parmigiana — $14.00

Tomato Sauce, Mozzarella Pepperoni topped with Mozzarella

Carnivore Greaser — $19.50

Hockey Skillet BBQ Sauce, Sausage, Bacon, Puddled Beef, Sliced Pepperoni, Sliced Ham, Sliced Cheese, Mozzarella topped with Mozzarella

Superb Supremo — $19.50

Tomato Sauce, Spinach, Olives, Pineapple, Capicola, Mushrooms, Cheese, Pepperoni, Puddled Beef, Sliced Cheese, Mozzarella topped with Sliced Ham

Roast Chicken — $19.50

Ham, Bacon, Tomato, Cheeze, topped with Mozzarella

Nacho Supreme — $15.00

Sausage, Cheese, Olives, Sliced Ham, Puddled Beef, Mozzarella topped with Mozzarella

Ask about our Gourmet Pizzas — COMING SOON

Taste a little slice of paradise

Dark Sky Park helps NSW lead the way in astro-tourism

NSW has strengthened its position as Australia’s astro-tourism capital with the certification of Australia’s first Dark Sky Park at Warrumbungle National Park by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA).

The rare honour is public recognition of the exceptional quality of the park’s starry nights and nocturnal environment which have made it a magnet for professional and amateur astronomers.

When you visit Dark Sky Park, you drop into the library and explore the completely renovated space — I think it looks great.

The library continues until 30 July — don’t miss out.

Gary Funnell

On Saturday, 6 July, the New South Wales Government announced on Australia’s first Dark Sky Park, joining an elite list of only 36 sites in the world.

“NSW is Australia’s premier astro-tourism destination. The certification of the Dark Sky Park in the Warrumbungles is a wonderful addition to the existing experiences on offer,” Mr Chapleau said.

“From the capital of astronomy at Coonabarabran to Outback star-gazing at Broken Hill, the breadth of astronomy experiences continues to grow and adds permanent fascination and curiosity to visitors and locals alike.”

IDA is a non-profit organisation that aims to stop light pollution and protect the night skies for present and future generations.

An IDA International Dark Sky Park (IDSP) is defined as a land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of every night and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for the scientific, educational, cultural heritage and public enjoyment.

IDSPs are now recognised as one of Australia’s most important assets and provide a tourism opportunity, helping to drive economic growth in the country.

NSW has a long history of guiding people to the stars, with many of the country’s most famous observatories located in the state.

The observatory is a significant addition to the state’s tourism offering, providing a unique and immersive experience for visitors to explore the night sky.

The observatory is open 365 days a year and is open to the public, providing a unique opportunity to view the stars and the universe.

The observatory also offers guided tours and workshops for visitors of all ages, allowing them to learn more about the stars and the night sky.

For more information about the observatory and its offerings, visit the website www.ida-wnp.com.au.

Warrumbungle National Park has been designated a Dark Sky Park, the first in Australia and the southern hemisphere.
State of Barwon

Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park coup

Great outcome for tourism

This was a great outcome for tourism at the local level. Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park was awarded the title of "Best Regional Project" in this year's national tourism awards. The project was led by the local council and supported by the state government.

The Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park is a unique natural asset in the region. It is the first dark sky park in Victoria and the fourth in Australia. Its designation will attract many visitors and boost the local economy.

The park is located in the Warrumbungle Mountains, a range known for its dark skies and starry nights. It will be a great destination for stargazing and astronomy enthusiasts.

Astronomy tourism

This is a great opportunity for the local tourism industry. The council has already started planning for the future of the park.

"We are excited to see the potential of this project," said the council's tourism manager. "We expect to see a surge in visitors, especially from astronomy enthusiasts and stargazers."

"We are working on developing a range of activities and events to attract visitors to the park. We are also considering the possibility of setting up a stargazing lodge."

The council is also exploring the possibility of developing a stargazing centre.

"We are still in the planning stage," said the council's manager. "But we are confident that this project will be a great success for the local tourism industry."
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Join the writers for dinner at BIRDS OF A FEATHER
on 21st July at 6:30 for 7:00pm • $50 per head
• Hors d'oeuvres • 5 courses • BYO drinks
Tickets available from Birds of a Feather, Preezies or Coonabarabran High School
RSVP: MONDAY 10th JULY

An evening with:
Jesse Blackadder
Sulari Gentilli and
Ellie Marney

Feast of Words is proudly supported by the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund

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