

Establishing a proposed Sunshine Coast Dark Sky Reserve Community Engagement Summary

August 2024

A dark sky is the natural occurrence of the sky at night, free from human-caused light pollution. Light pollution can impact on the quality of our night skies and the amount of light pollution on the Sunshine Coast is expected to increase as our population grows.

To help recognise, protect and celebrate our dark skies, Sunshine Coast Council has been investigating potential opportunities to assist.

As part of these investigations, establishing a Dark Sky Reserve (in the Sunshine Coast hinterland) under the International Dark Sky Places Program was identified as an appropriate mechanism.

In November 2023, Council commenced a phased community engagement process with formal community consultation between 20 May to 16 June 2024, seeking feedback on the proposal to inform ongoing considerations.

The May/June 2024 consultation program invited our communities inside and outside the proposed reserve area to have their say and participate in a range of conversations, surveys and events.

Community feedback was received through:

- Online surveys
- Community conversations at drop-in sessions and local events
- Community information sessions and presentations
- Individual submissions.

Promotion highlights



have your say
project webpage
and online survey



6
community
drop-in sessions



5,800+
correspondences sent
to property owners
in the proposed reserve



3
promotions
at local expos



1
stargazing
event



1
community
information session



social media
promotion



print, online
and radio advertising



12
static displays

Participation highlights



1,213
surveys received



48%
of survey respondents
resided within the
proposed Dark Sky
Reserve area



35
individual
submissions received



3
community
presentations



1
university
presentation



>150
community
conversations



130
stargazing
event attendees

What the community told us

Protection of dark skies for future generations

The majority of feedback received through the engagement process, including 95% of survey respondents, expressed support for the protection of our night sky for future generations. The community see a Dark Sky Reserve designation through the International Dark Sky Places Program as a great initiative and positive approach towards protecting our night skies.

The community recognises our night sky as an important natural asset of the region and the role it plays in people's connection to place.

Feedback received also acknowledged the many benefits of protecting the night sky including preserving wildlife and ecosystems as well as for human experiences (i.e. health and wellbeing, recreation and astro-tourism).

The proposed location

The proposed location in the Sunshine Coast hinterland (encompassing the Mary River catchment and adjoining State Protected areas within the local government area) was considered as appropriate for most respondents. Feedback also recognised the need to manage light pollution in other areas of the region including our coastal towns.

The balancing act: tourism and preservation of place

Getting the balance right is important to the community to ensure our region's landscape, character and local amenity is retained and the natural areas preserved, while ensuring tourism or any increased visitation within the proposed area does not negatively impact on the values a Dark Sky Reserve designation seeks to protect.

Community involvement and collaboration
It is important to the community to be involved in our dark sky journey, seeking to be engaged and provide input as we continue to plan for the protection of our dark skies.

Further information was welcomed on the process of a Dark Sky Reserve if pursued and what it means for community in the proposed area. There was some concerns from residents nearby to Kirbys Road Environment Reserve (the proposed core area of the Dark Sky Reserve) about the impact the proposed 'core' would have in relation to visitation numbers, local traffic, road safety, amenity and general management of the environment reserve.

There is a strong willingness and understanding that Council, community and key organisations have a role to play in the future success of a proposed Dark Sky Reserve on the Sunshine Coast.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the proposed Dark Sky Reserve Project's community engagement.

Stay informed

1. Council encourages community to stay informed about upcoming project stages including future consultation opportunities by visiting the dedicated project page on [Council's website](#).
2. Council looks forward to continuing to work together with community on this important project in an effort to protect our future night skies for generations to come.

Have questions?

Have questions or want to learn more about the project, contact the project team:
els@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au