

EVERY STAR COUNTS, EVERY LIGHT MATTERS

Council Responsibilities and Light Pollution

How Councils Play a Key Role in Protecting the Night

Unnecessary or poorly designed artificial light at night is a growing form of environmental pollution, with serious consequences for wildlife, human health, energy use, and night-time amenity. It also represents a significant financial cost—up to 30% of outdoor lighting is wasted, and councils that adopt energy-efficient, smart lighting systems can save hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in electricity and maintenance costs.

As providers of public lighting, assessors of development, and stewards of public land, councils have a duty of care and an opportunity to protect the night while delivering long-term economic and environmental benefits to their communities.

✓ WHY LIGHT MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- Enhances public safety and night-time visibility
- Reduces operating costs and carbon emissions
- Protects nocturnal ecosystems and biodiversity
- Builds community pride in local environmental action

✗ WHAT HAPPENS WITHOUT ACTION

- Increased skyglow and loss of starry skies
- Disrupted wildlife navigation and behaviour
- Melatonin suppression and sleep disorders in humans
- Millions of \$ wasted in unnecessary electricity costs

THE COST OF WASTED LIGHT

- Up to 30% of outdoor lighting is wasted
- In the US, wasted light costs \$3.3 billion annually, creates 21 million tonnes of CO₂ which contributes to global warming
- Switching to shielded, low intensity warm-colour lighting can help cut energy use by 60% or more

Key Responsibilities of Councils

1. Apply national lighting standards/Guidelines

- AS/NZS 4282:2022 – Obtrusive lighting
- AS/NZS 1158 – Roadway lighting
- National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife (2023) – Environmental protection
- These provide best-practice benchmarks for brightness, direction, spectrum and control.



Image by ASphotofamily on Freepik

Lighting enhances public safety.

2. Consider lighting impacts in:

- State and Commonwealth Environmental Impact Assessments, including the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity (EPBC) Act
- Council Development Assessments and Approvals
- Coastal, bushland, and riparian zone management

Lighting is a potential environmental pollutant, just like noise or emissions, and must be assessed accordingly.

3. Upgrade council assets

- Install fully shielded, low-glare lighting
- Use warm LEDs (2700K or below)
- Adopt smart controls: timers, dimmers, curfews, motion sensors etc.

A council with 10,000 streetlights spending \$1.2M annually on electricity could save \$480,000–\$840,000 per year, plus cut emissions and maintenance costs.

Every star counts. Every light matters.

Be part of a global effort to restore the night.



AUSTRALASIAN
DARK SKY
ALLIANCE

Australasian Dark Sky Alliance

www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/

How to Lead Locally

- Conduct a lighting audit of council assets
- Embed Light Management Policies into local planning instruments
- Develop a Dark Sky policy for new subdivisions
- Partner with community, tourism, and environmental groups
- Educate residents on lighting at home
- Be aware of their responsibilities for wildlife protection under the EPBC Act and any State level legislation

Support Available from ADSA

The Australasian Dark Sky Alliance can help your council:

- Select appropriate lighting
- Provide lighting policy templates
- Train and educate infrastructure and planning teams
- Deliver community education resources

