

# EVERY STAR COUNTS, EVERY LIGHT MATTERS

## Digital Billboards and Light Pollution

Guidance for councils, advertisers, and operators on responsible LED signage

### Why Digital Billboards Can Be a Problem at Night

Digital billboards use powerful LED lights to display ads, often day and night. While they're bright and eye-catching, if they're too bright or left on too long, they can:

- Light up the sky and block our view of the stars
- Keep nearby residents awake
- Confuse or harm wildlife, especially birds and insects
- Distract drivers

The good news? With the right settings, billboards can work well during the day without polluting the night.

### What's the Right Brightness?

Just like your phone dims at night, billboards should too. Brightness should change depending on the time of day and where they're located.

| LOCATION TYPE           | DAYTIME BRIGHTNESS   | NIGHT-TIME BRIGHTNESS |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Busy city or industry   | High (ok during day) | Much lower at night   |
| Suburbs or town centres | Moderate             | Low brightness        |
| Near homes or nature    | Lower during the day | Very low at night     |

Billboards near homes, wetlands, beaches or bushland should be dimmed or turned off at night.

### What Good Billboards Should Do

1. Automatically dim at night  
Billboards should sense when it's dark and lower their brightness—just like outdoor lights with sensors.
2. Set a night-time limit  
Even when dimmed, the brightness should never go over a safe level at night.
3. Turn off late at night  
In quiet areas, signs should switch off or go dark by 10 or 11 pm. Earlier if near wildlife.
4. Show calm, slow content  
Avoid fast-changing images or white flashes at night. Stick to still images with slow changes.



Good billboards dim at night.

## What the Rules Say

### THERE ARE LIGHTING STANDARDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES THAT SAY:

- Don't shine light into homes
- Keep signs dim and respectful of dark areas
- Avoid lighting up parks, coasts, or nature reserves
- Follow local council policies and approvals

Signs also need to follow road safety rules so they don't distract drivers.

## A Real Example: Brisbane

### IN BRISBANE, A LARGE ROADSIDE DIGITAL BILLBOARD WAS UPDATED TO:

- Automatically dim at night
- Switch off at 10 pm
- Stop using bright white or flashing ads after dark

Nearby residents said it was much better, and the night sky became clearer. Importantly, advertisers still got great results—just with less impact.

## Every star counts. Every light matters.

*Be part of a global effort to restore the night.*



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**Australasian Dark Sky Alliance**

[www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/](http://www.australasiandarkskyalliance.org/)

## What Councils and Communities Can Do

- Ask that new billboards dim at night
- Make sure they turn off late at night, especially in quiet areas
- Avoid placing digital signs near beaches, bushland or wetlands
- Review permits for signs already in place
- Support rules that protect dark skies and local amenity

## Billboards Don't Have to Brighten the Whole Sky

With the right technology and policies, digital signs can be useful without lighting up the whole town. Smart, respectful lighting is better for everyone—especially after dark.



"Peanuts Movie Bus Stop Shelter Billboard" by Brecht Bug, CC BY-NC-ND