

Dark Sky Policy



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Responsible Officer	Director – Development and Community Services
Adopted	8 May 2018
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Due date of next Review	August 2029

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- 1.1 Mid Murray Council's commitment to encouraging and preserving the natural dark skies in the area known as the "River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve" (the Dark Sky Reserve).
- 1.2 Along with the Light Management Plan, this Policy's objective is to ensure that the Dark Sky Reserve satisfies the criteria set by DarkSky International ensuring its promotion and longevity.

2. Policy

- 2.1 Mid Murray Council acknowledges the uniqueness and importance of the Dark Sky Reserve and aims to preserve, protect and enhance the night sky within the defined area. The distinctive and exclusive opportunities resulting from a formal internationally recognised Dark Sky Reserve, including the promotion of the Mid Murray District overall is supported and encouraged.
- 2.2 Council supports measures described within the Light Management Plan to ensure that the already naturally dark sky in the scoped area is not only protected, but also further enhanced through various approaches including lighting education programs and reducing the number of lights and modifications to existing outdoor light fittings and globes.
- 2.3 Council commits to encourage other locations to become environmental leaders on dark sky issues by communicating the importance of dark skies and by providing an example of what is possible with excellence in community education, application of policy and leadership in innovation to achieve and maintain the natural resources of dark skies.
- 2.4 The primary aims of this Policy are:
 - 2.4.1 To raise community awareness of the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve and seek their assistance and support in maintaining the Dark Sky.
 - 2.4.2 To ensure that Council, other Government bodies and private landholders within the scoped area understand the importance and value they provide through their assistance in preserving, enhancing and promoting the Dark Sky Reserve.
 - 2.4.3 To promote the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve as part of Council's economic development and tourism plan, with the aim to attract tourists from around the world.

- 2.4.4 To provide guidance and education to all occupiers, both individuals and organisations, within the scoped area on how best to undertake development and operate their sites without negatively impacting the Dark Sky Reserve.
- 2.4.5 To educate the community on the impact of Artificial Light at Night (ALAN) on Human, Flora and Fauna throughout the local government area and in particular in the close surrounding areas of the Dark Sky Reserve. Education resources may be developed through the ongoing relationships with the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance and DarkSky International and other research and industry expert resources.
- 2.4.6 To continue to actively engage with local residents in the surrounding towns and areas of the Dark Sky Reserve, providing advice and guidance on good lighting practices that are Dark Sky compliant. In particular this is required to ensure that no lighting is to be projected directly into the Dark Sky Reserve.
- 2.4.7 This Policy and associated Light Management Plan should in no way endanger human safety, road traffic, farm livestock or farming activities by restrictive lighting practices.
- 2.5 Mid Murray Council recognises its statutory role relating to development and that the associated design elements must align with the State's Planning and Design Code, the Building Code of Australia and relevant Australian Standards. This Policy may also be used to frame future statutory planning policy.
- 2.6 So far as reasonably practicable and to ensure compliance with the overarching guidelines of the International Dark Sky Association, the following criteria shall be met by any new developments within the scoped area:
 - 2.6.1 Lighting plans must be provided with any new Development Applications that will lead to the development of new external lighting, or is a development of a commercial nature, within the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve.
 - 2.6.2 Assessment against the table/matrix detailing appropriate lighting types, levels and locations when considering new Development Applications, and when renewing/replacing lighting.
 - 2.6.3 No lighting shall be directed towards the sky (unless required for safety reasons), and all proposed outdoor lighting must be of a design that minimises light spill.
 - 2.6.4 Lighting plans shall also consider the environmental impact of Artificial Light at Night, on the local environment, including human, fauna and flora as much as possible.
- 2.7 Mid Murray Council commits to ensuring Dark Sky appropriate lighting will be designed/located accordingly when renewing/replacing Council owned/operated lighting within the scoped area.
- 2.8 Mid Murray Council also recognises the impact of illuminated signage contributing to artificial light at night (ALAN) and its impact on Dark Sky compliance and the ecosystem in which it is located. Approved illuminated signage must comply with the guidelines shown in the Council's Light Management Plan.
- 2.9 This Policy also considers the growing availability of smart technologies to assist with the control of ALAN. The Council looks to apply best practice and innovative solutions for the application of smart technology lighting solutions where practicable. A smart technology approach to ALAN ensures that the Council is leading the community in the application of these technologies as well as offering education to the community in benefits of applying such technologies through a localised methodology.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to the Dark Sky Reserve, a geographical area covering more than 3,200 square kilometres.

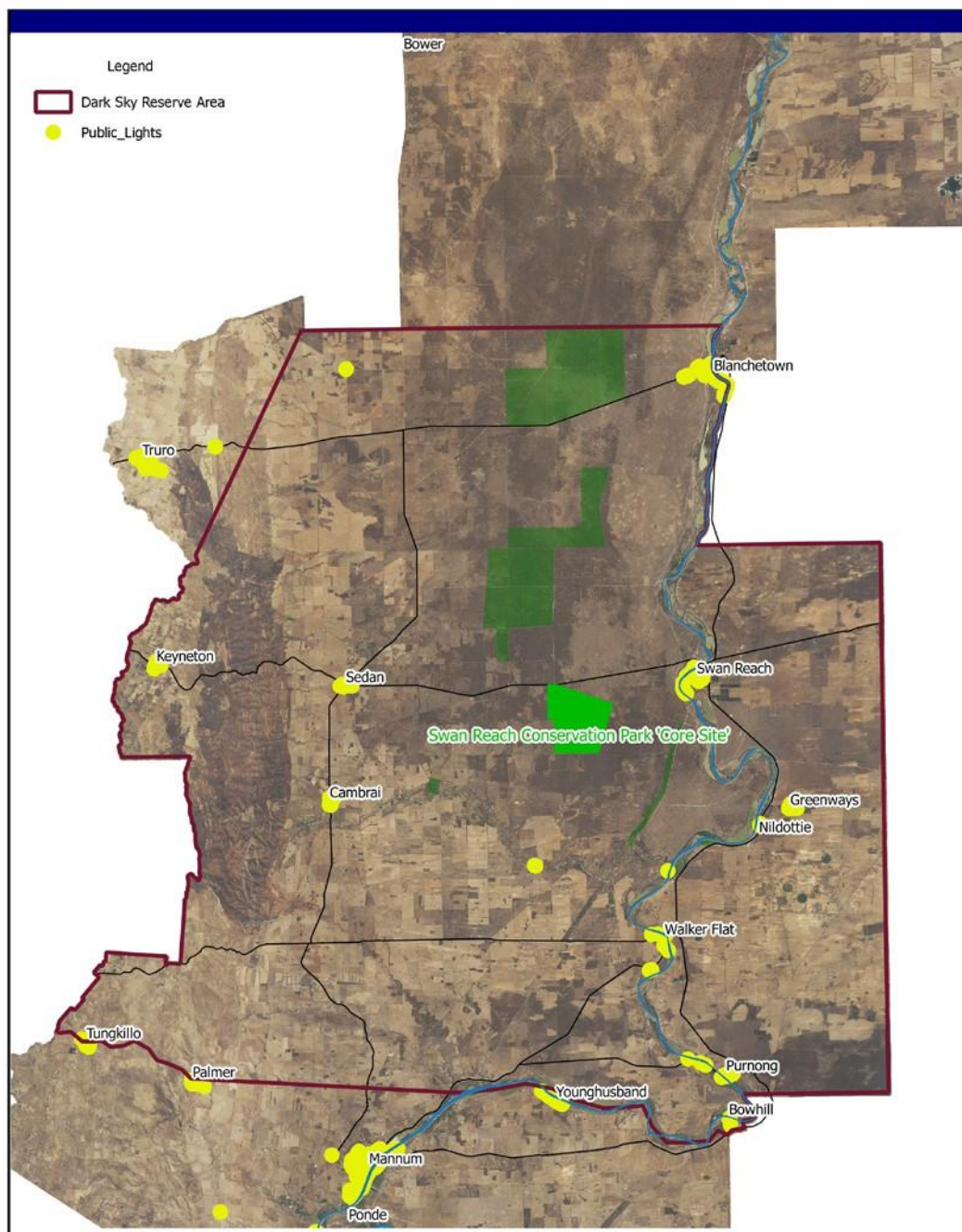


Figure 1: Map of the River Murray International Dark Sky Reserve

4. Policy Responsibility

The Director – Development and Community Services is responsible for ensuring the proper operation of this Policy.

5. Availability/Accessibility

- 5.1 [This Policy](#) and Council's [Fees & Charges Register](#) are available to be downloaded free of charge from Council's website: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.
- 5.2 This Policy is available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours. Hard copies, for a fee in accordance with Council's schedule of Fees and Charges, can be provided upon request.

6. Legislative Framework / Other References

- 6.1 [Local Government Act 1999](#)
- 6.2 [Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016](#)
- 6.3 [Planning and Design Code](#)
- 6.4 [Light Management Plan](#)
- 6.5 [National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife May 2023](#) – Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

7. Document History

This Policy shall be reviewed at least every four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council requires.

Version	Adopted	Minute	Description of Change
1	8 May 2018	20421/1	Adopted
2	19 August 2025	C08-25/017	Amendments made to include: - Integration of smart technology. - Stronger emphasis on environmental impact. - Clearer planning and development requirements. - Commitment to community education and leadership. - Expanded scope for compliance and innovation.