

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>, a higher level of visibility is on the private website <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:

- State Environmental Planning Policy (Integration and Repeals) 2016
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/EPIs/2016-310.pdf>
- Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Amendment (Observatory and Defence Facility) Order 2016
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/EPIs/2016-309.pdf>
- Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Siding Spring Observatory) Regulation 2016
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/regulations/2016-303.pdf>

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>

<http://www.smh.com.au/technology/sci-tech/sydney-observatory-wants-australias-first-urban-dark-sky-park-20170628-gx0blx.html> (with embedded video clip on WDSP, 2 Jul 2017)

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com.au/nature/australias-has-its-first-dark-sky-park.aspx>

<http://www.australiangeographic.com.au/news/2016/07/warrumbungle-np-declared-australias-first-dark-sky-park>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com.au/2016/07/03/warrumbungles-becomes-australias-first-dark-sky-park_a_21423572/

<http://travel.nine.com.au/2016/11/08/10/20/warrumbungle-national-park-coonabarabran-nsw-time-lapse>

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.

Warrumbungle

Dark Sky Park



nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

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, clean 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.



Whitegums star trail.



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 in 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



The Milky Way over Siding Spring Observatory.

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 send 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?



WORST



BAD



BETTER



BEST

Warrumbungle National Park



Yaama (welcome)

The word 'Warrumbungle' has its roots in the local Aboriginal language. It is usually translated to 'Crooked Mountains'. The mountains and the stories held within them have been drawing Aboriginal people from the surrounding plains for thousands of years.

In 2006, the park was added to the National Heritage List. The listing recognises not only the park's extraordinary volcanic landforms which are unrivalled anywhere else in Australia, but its impressive biodiversity and importance as a refuge in inland south-east Australia.

The combination of the arid western plains, moist eastern slopes and elevation above the surrounding plains, provides habitat for a large variety of species. You are bound to see numerous animals including emus, red-necked wallabies and eastern grey kangaroos. Please report any sightings of koalas to the visitor centre to help us with our survey.

Warrumbungle National Park is Australia's first International Dark Sky Park, making it the perfect spot for stargazing, amateur astronomy and camping under the starriest of skies.

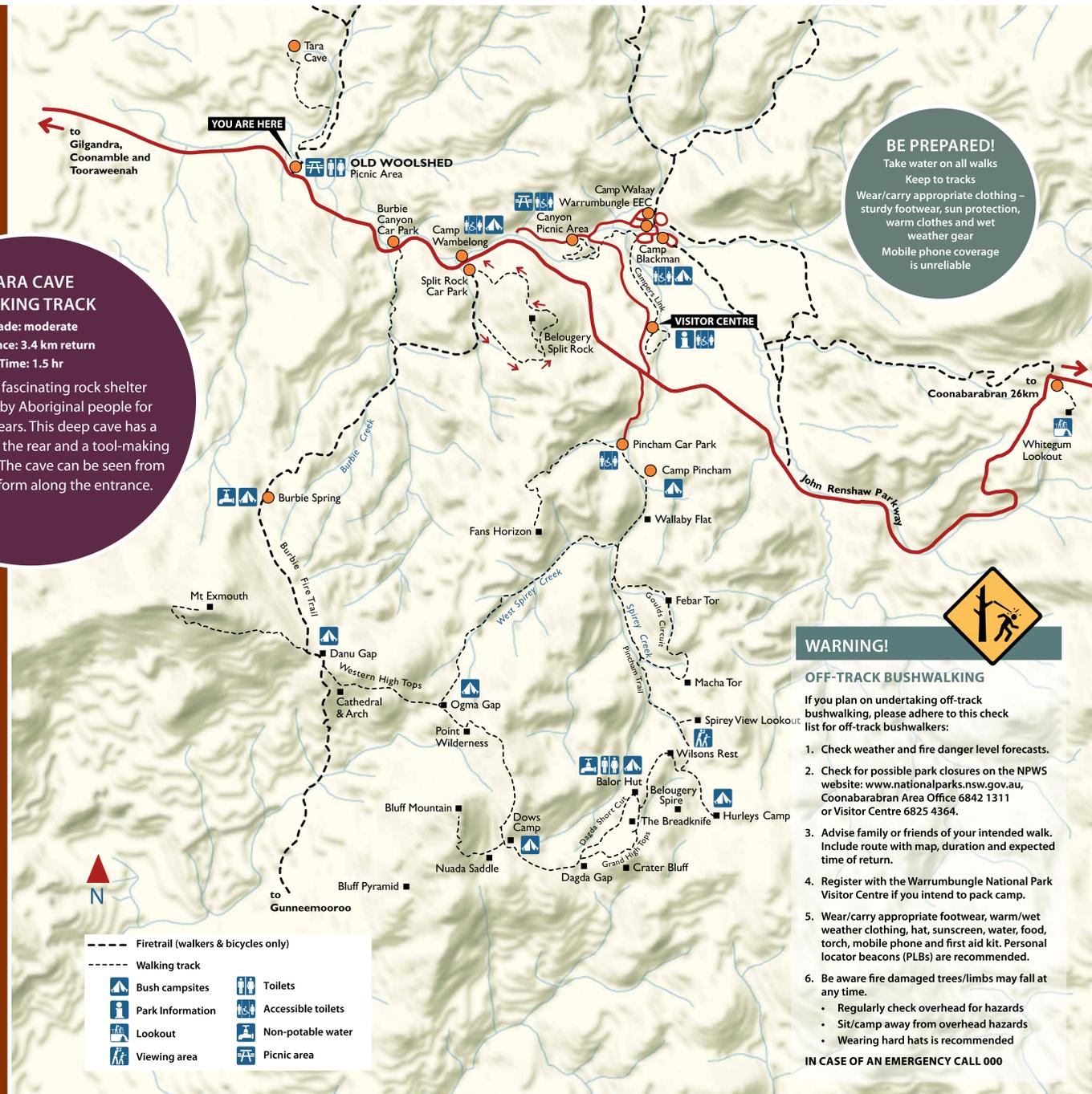
CAMPING AND DAILY PARK USE FEES

- VISITORS are required to pay a daily park use fee for each vehicle, or display an annual pass.
- CAMPERS are required to pay a daily park use fee as well as camping fees for each night of your stay.
- Please pay your fees at the visitor centre. If the centre is closed, use the self-registration envelopes provided at the visitor centre entrance.

This park is patrolled regularly and on the spot fines may be issued.

TARA CAVE WALKING TRACK
 Grade: moderate
 Distance: 3.4 km return
 Time: 1.5 hr

Tara Cave is a fascinating rock shelter that was used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years. This deep cave has a large chamber at the rear and a tool-making site at the front. The cave can be seen from a viewing platform along the entrance.



BE PREPARED!
 Take water on all walks
 Keep to tracks
 Wear/carry appropriate clothing – sturdy footwear, sun protection, warm clothes and wet weather gear
 Mobile phone coverage is unreliable

WARNING!
OFF-TRACK BUSHWALKING
 If you plan on undertaking off-track bushwalking, please adhere to this check list for off-track bushwalkers:

1. Check weather and fire danger level forecasts.
2. Check for possible park closures on the NPWS website: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au, Coonabarabran Area Office 6842 1311 or Visitor Centre 6825 4364.
3. Advise family or friends of your intended walk. Include route with map, duration and expected time of return.
4. Register with the Warrumbungle National Park Visitor Centre if you intend to pack camp.
5. Wear/carry appropriate footwear, warm/wet weather clothing, hat, sunscreen, water, food, torch, mobile phone and first aid kit. Personal locator beacons (PLBs) are recommended.
6. Be aware fire damaged trees/limbs may fall at any time.
 - Regularly check overhead for hazards
 - Sit/camp away from overhead hazards
 - Wearing hard hats is recommended

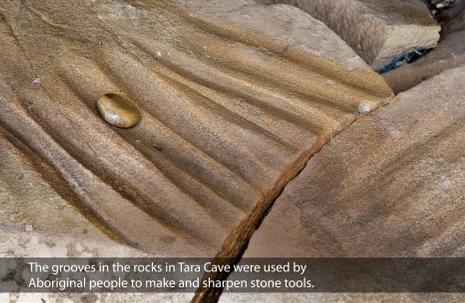
IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY CALL 000

CROOKED MOUNTAINS

For over 17,000 years Aboriginal people have been drawn to the 'Crooked Mountains'. Campsites, places of stone tool manufacture, grinding grooves for sharpening wooden tools and stone axes, rock engravings, ceremonial stone arrangements and burial sites are some of the evidence of Aboriginal life here.

Aboriginal people are strongly connected to Warrumbungle National Park and regularly consult on management decisions.

The most accessible Aboriginal site you can visit is Tara Cave. The cave was occupied at least 4,800 years ago. Grinding grooves can be clearly seen on the cave floor.



The grooves in the rocks in Tara Cave were used by Aboriginal people to make and sharpen stone tools.

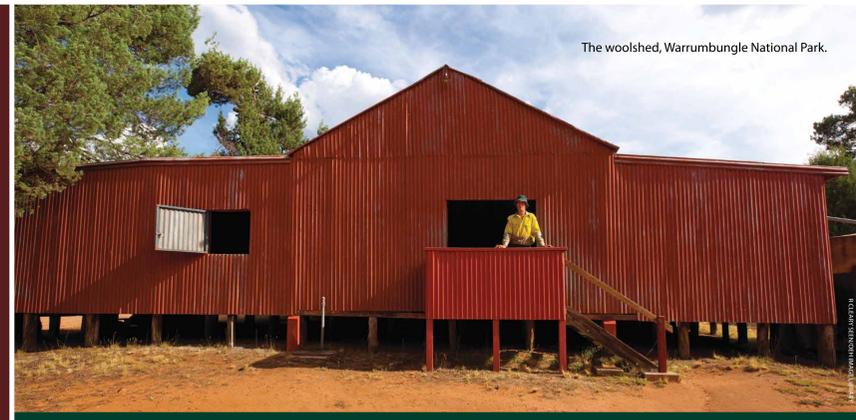
Warrumbungle National Park has a rich diversity of plants used by Aboriginal people. Fruit from quandong trees were harvested, wattle seeds were processed for damper and kurrajong bark was made into twine.



Traditionally, quandongs were an important food source for Aboriginal people of western NSW. Ripe, red quandong fruits are eaten raw or dried.



Wattle seed damper is nutritious and was a great source of protein and carbohydrates in times of drought.



The woolshed, Warrumbungle National Park.

THE WOOLSHED

By the mid 1830s squatters had begun to move their sheep into the Warrumbungle region. There was little effort made to stop them and by 1848 squatters were formally issued pastoral leases.

The woolshed that once stood here was thought to have been built by Aught Knight who leased the Strathmore run in the 1920s and 1930s. The woolshed was small, with only three shearing stands and room for only 12 bales of wool.

Around 1936, Alfred and Idella Pincham purchased the Strathmore lease. After World War II, they extended the woolshed with timber cut from the hill above and milled at Baradine. New yards were also constructed.

In the 1950s the Pinchams' generously relinquished substantial portions of their leasehold (including the Breadknife and Beloungery Spire) to enable the creation of Warrumbungle National Park.

As part of the park, the woolshed became a much-loved venue for meetings and group accommodation.

In the devastating Wambelong Fire of 2013, the woolshed burnt to the ground. All that was left was a pile of charred timber and corrugated iron, and the concrete remains of the generator stand that you can still see.



The interior of the woolshed showing the exposed structure made from local timber.

WALKING

Walking tracks have been developed for people of all ages and walking abilities to ensure that an awe-inspiring Warrumbungle experience is available for everyone.

Many tracks are long and steep and you must carry water with you. Wear appropriate clothing including sturdy shoes and a sun hat.

Why not pop into the visitor centre to find out what walks are best suited to your group?

Please check the website for any alerts/closures that may currently be in place at: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au
 Also check the weather and fire danger to ensure preparedness and safety.

CAMPING

The two main camping grounds in the park are Camp Blackman and Camp Wambelong. Camp Blackman has powered and unpowered sites and hot showers available.

Camping in the park provides a fantastic opportunity to enjoy the wildlife, the night sky and the joys of getting close to nature.

Make sure you comply with the campground rules so that everyone can enjoy their stay in the park.

HELP LOOK AFTER WARRUMBUNGLE NATIONAL PARK

- Take your rubbish with you or use bins provided
- Pets are not permitted in national parks
- Firewood collection is not permitted
- Hunting is not permitted
- Generators are not permitted

What can you do to help the Dark Sky Park?



nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

- Turn off your lights when 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



WORST



BEST



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

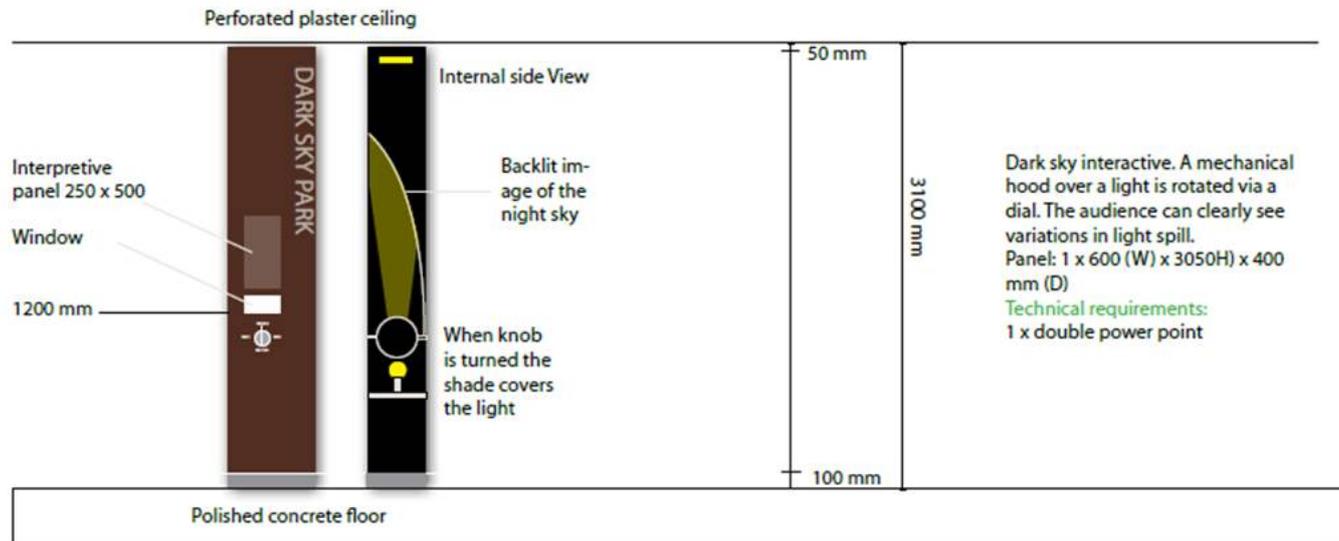
Discounts available for Seniors Card holders

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





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'AIN'T SHE SWEET'

See her when you're walking down that street...
a well located brick cottage, currently leased for \$165.00 per week to a lovely tenant and located close to the main shopping centre as well.
'Oh, ain't she nice, Well look her over once or twice' at just

\$128,000

(With thanks to The Beatles' 'Ain't She Sweet')

All information contained herein is gathered from sources I deem to be reliable. However I cannot guarantee its accuracy and interested persons should rely on their own enquiries.



Jaylor Single Auger TMR mixers are available in a variety of configurations ranging in capacity from 9.9 to 12.7 cubic metres.

They are ideal for feeding small to medium-sized beef feedlots, as well as large sheep and goat facilities. Each one is an industry leader in its class at quickly processing round or square baled hay and/or baleage into uniform rations that will resist sorting.



Optional Custom Made Elevator

NEWTON'S MECHANICAL

Crane St., Coonabarabran Ph 6842 1167 Jason 0428 421 167

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, astronomers and local astro-tourism operators.

Australian Astronomical Observatory head of Lighting and Environment, Professor Fred Watson, who spear-headed 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 exemplify the benefits of dark skies and the use of sky-friendly lighting," Professor Watson said.

The heritage-listed national park attracts over 80,000 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 in tourism to the area.

Untapped resource

Steve Loane, general manager of Warrumbungle Shire Council, said he was delighted with the announcement of the Warrumbungle Dark Sky Park.

"The international travelling public is an untapped resource for the Dark Sky Park, and we welcome the opportunity to support astro-tourism in the Warrumbungle Region," Mr Loane said.

"The Warrumbungle Shire Council lighting policy that regulates the installation and use of lighting within an 18-kilometre radius of the Australian Astronomical Observatory at Siding Spring is now captured in state legislation, with the Department of Planning gazetted a new State Environmental Planning Policy, otherwise known as a SEPP. This means

that any development, including mining ventures, within a 200km radius of Siding Spring needs to abide by the Dark Sky Planning Guideline."

However, Mr Loane said the guideline is not restrictive, and serves to protect the observing conditions at Siding Spring.

Marnie Ogg, 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 Ogg said.

"This is a fabulous result for tourism and the park itself.

"A Dark Sky Park doesn't mean no lighting, or people stumbling around in the dark, it just shows how good correct

lighting can be, to not have the wastage of upward-pointing lighting.

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

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

"NamibRand Nature Reserve, a private nature reserve in southern Namibia, was designated an International Dark Sky Reserve in 2012," she said.

"An enormous number of tourists now travel to the reserve."

Funding

State Government Planning Minister, Rob Stokes and Environment Minister, Mark Speakman also welcomed the park's new status.

Mr Stokes said the park's dark sky qualities will be protected with \$100,000 in funding to control light pollution, while a new Dark Sky Planning Guideline has

been developed with the Australian Astronomical Observatory.

"Warrumbungle National Park has long been recognised not only for its beauty at ground level, but also for the wonder it holds in the night sky above," Mr Stokes said.

"It's an outstanding place to view the night sky and, with the nearby Siding Spring Observatory, plays an important role in Australian astronomical research.

"As nearby communities grow, it's important we plan to protect the park's dark sky qualities from light pollution now and into the future."

Environmental benefits

Mr Speakman said the Dark Sky Park's status would benefit the environment as well as stargazers.

"Light pollution has a detrimental effect not only on professional and amateur astronomy, but it also impacts on those parts of the ecosystem, such as nocturnal animals, which are reliant on dark night skies," Mr Speakman said.

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

"I view the Dark Sky Park declaration as the massive thank you to the residents of Coonabarabran, Coonamble and Gilgandra shires for reducing light spill for all of those years and enabling Australia's number one astronomy research facility to continue to contribute to science and to remain relevant," Cr Shinton said.

"The Siding Spring complex contributes millions of dollars to our economy in wages alone - never mind the contribution to tourism, to the suppliers, contractors, accommodation and, of course, the world-acclaimed Science in the Pub and BOK Lecture contributions.

(Continued page 7)



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

COONABARABRAN

Neat and Tidy Family Home...



\$182,500

This information has been obtained from a third party. We make no representation to its accuracy. All photos, computer images and maps are indicative only. We are merely passing on the information. Interested parties should make their own enquiries.

Three bedroom, brick-veneer family home, two bedrooms have built-ins. Large lounge room. Near new kitchen and dining combined, with pantry, new stove and tiled floors. Bath/shower and vanity, separate toilet. Linen press, laundry with built-in cupboard. Closed-in back sunroom. Freshly painted inside. Security doors and windows. Insulated. 20x10 garden shed. Rain water tank. Opposite Cooninda Village, close to hospital...



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In the Library



By Officer in Charge of Coonabarabran Library, Gary Furnell

Winter Reading Program
Macquarie Regional Library is giving you the chance to win an iPad Air - the latest product from Apple with the capacity to do nearly everything

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you would want from a portable device.

Our Winter Reading promotion couldn't be simpler: grab an entry form - or several - from Coonabarabran Library, borrow books, audio books, magazines, or download e-books, e-audio and e-magazines from the library's website, complete the entry form - which details what you've enjoyed from the library - and hand the completed form to any branch of Macquarie Regional Library by 5pm, 29 July to be eligible for the major prize draw.

Entries are limited to five per person, and items must have been borrowed from Macquarie Regional Library. Already we have had dozens of completed entry forms given to us, but there is still two weeks left to participate!

Amnesty on overdue fees

The re-opening of Dubbo Library on Monday, 4 July, is being celebrated by an

amnesty on overdue fees. So, if you have a library item at home, bring it back to the library as soon as possible and we'll waive any overdue fees. And if you have returned items in the past, but still have the overdue fees, present your library card and we can waive those overdue fees too.

We want to add to the value of the extensive renovation of Dubbo Library - Macquarie Regional Library's largest branch, and the headquarters of MRL's administrative functions - with a fresh start for as many people as possible.

When you next visit Dubbo, drop into the library and explore the completely renovated space - I think it looks great!

The amnesty of fees continues until 30 July - so don't miss out!

Gary Furnell

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.

The accolade is the latest feather in the cap for NSW, which offers myriad astro-tourism experiences, including the country's largest optical telescopes, the world's biggest "virtual solar system drive" and quirky astro-accommodation and tours.

Astronomy/star-gazing observatories can be found in the Blue Mountains, Parkes, Dubbo, Broken Hill, Bathurst, Port Macquarie and Mudgee.

Decision welcomed
Minister for Trade, Tourism and Major Events, Stuart Ayres welcomed the designation of Warrumbungle National Park as a Dark Sky Park.

"The Warrumbungle National Park in Country and Outback NSW has long been renowned for its star-gazing opportunities, due to its crystal-clear skies, low humidity, high altitude and world-class optical astronomy research facility at neighbouring Siding Spring Observatory," Mr Ayres said.

"The announcement is yet another fantastic win for NSW, reinforcing our position as the country's leading tourism and events state.

"I encourage astronomy enthusiasts to start planning a trip to Australia's first Dark Sky Park for a memorable, regional NSW first-hand experience."

Dark Sky Park joins elite list

Destination NSW chief executive officer, Sandra Chipchase said she was delighted Warrumbungle National Park had been recognised

as Australia's first Dark Sky Park, joining an elite list of only 36 others in the world.

"NSW is Australia's premier astronomy state, with the certification of the Dark Sky Park in the Warrumbungles a wonderful addition to the existing experiences on offer," Ms Chipchase said.

"From the capital of astronomy at Coonabarabran to Outback star-gazing at Broken Hill, the breadth of astronomy experiences continues to grow amid a fascination and curiosity from 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 starry nights and a nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, culture heritage and public enjoyment.

Astro experiences
Following are 10 out-of-this-world astro-experiences in NSW:

1. Coonabarabran is known as the astronomy capital of Australia. Siding Spring, Australia's premier optical and infrared observatory is a 20-minute drive away in the Warrumbungle Mountains. The observatory has several telescopes on the site, including the world famous 3.9 metre Anglo-Australian Telescope. The site has a visitor centre with a small astronomy exhibition.

2. Experience the world's largest virtual solar system drive, a daytime experience with 3D planet models on billboards at Visitor Information Centres and on roadsides, imitating

a scaled model of the solar system. There are five drives departing from Dubbo, Birriwa, Merriwa, Tamworth and Bellata, finishing at Siding Spring Observatory - the Sun.

3. The Bathurst Observatory Research Facility offers a sensational way to get a live view of some of the wonders of the planets and the solar system, along with special solar telescope tours to view the sun. Public tours operate most Friday and Saturday nights at 7.30pm and every night during school holiday periods.

4. A rising number of NSW operators offer unique star-gazing services, from sleeping under the stars in astro-accommodation at Skywatch Observatory Domestays at Coonabarabran, astro mini-golf at the Dubbo Observatory, to Blue Mountains night tours with Tread Lightly Eco Tours, where visitors can view glow worms and learn more about nocturnal species and ecology.

5. Star-gaze above the vines at the Mudgee Observatory. Situated a 15-minute drive west of town, the observatory has several telescopes as well as a theatre and flat-screen planetarium that runs features on the night sky and space missions.

6. Located on Camp Road, just behind Taronga Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo Observatory has up to five powerful telescopes to view the night sky, including a 14-inch Meade LX200gps, as well as a theatre. Solar viewing shows are available during the day, with star-gazing sessions at 7pm daily during winter and 6.15pm and 8pm during school holidays.

7. The NSW State Heritage-registered Linden Observatory

in the Blue Mountains celebrates the life work of Ken Beames, one of Australia's most famous telescope manufacturers. Now operated by amateur astronomers and used as a centre for astronomical education. Group bookings and viewing nights available upon request

8. The visitors' centre at the Parkes Observatory is open seven days a week, giving visitors the opportunity to view the iconic "Dish" first hand and to visit a dedicated astronomy and space science exhibition.

It's been more than 45 years since Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first to set foot on the surface of the Moon

9. Over the October long weekend, Siding Spring Observatory will host StarFest, celebrating all things astronomy. Visitors can tour the telescopes, hear talks by world famous astronomers and learn more about how they use the telescopes at Australia's premier astronomical research facility

10. The vast desert plains of the NSW outback provide the perfect blank canvas for star-gazing. Outback Astronomy in Broken Hill offers nightly tours (weather dependant) for novice star-gazers. The 60-minute tour gives participants an introduction to famous stars, constellations, nebulae and more during a virtual cruise across the Milky Way.

For more information on astro-related attractions and experiences in NSW visit www.visitnsw.com.



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

FEAST OF WORDS 2016

An evening with:

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Sulari Gentill and
Ellie Marney

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Hawaiian Heaven - \$14.00
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Pepperoni Perfecto - \$14.00
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Carnivore Craver - \$18.50
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Superb Supremo - \$18.50
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Roast Chicken - \$19.50
Hickory Smoked BBQ Sauce, Pulled Roast Chicken, Camembert Cheese, Baby Spinach, Spanish Onion topped with Mozzarella.

Chicken & Bacon Delight - \$19.50
Hickory Smoked BBQ Sauce, Pulled Roast Chicken, Bacon, Baby Spinach, Spanish Onion, Aioli topped with Mozzarella.

Very Vegetarian - \$18.50
Tomato Sauce, Zucchini, Mushroom, Fresh Tomato, Capsicum, Pineapple, Spanish Onion topped with Mozzarella.

Extras - \$ 1.00
Anchovies, Chilli, Garlic Aioli, Jalapeno, Extra Cheese.

State of Barwon



By State Member for Barwon, KEVIN HUMPHRIES

\$4.8m fund to help boost local tourism

Applications are open for a \$4.8 million fund to bolster local tourism infrastructure projects across the state. Local and State Government entities, Aboriginal Land Councils, non-government organisations and private operators are encouraged to apply for a share of the funds as part of the 2016-17 Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program (TDDI).

With \$4.8 million on offer for tourism projects, I encourage eligible groups to apply, whether it is for exhibition facilities, road upgrades or enhancements to parks or marine areas. This initiative will help boost the local tourism industry and encourage economic growth in communities.

I encourage all NSW tourism operators and organisations to submit their applications as soon as they can so they don't miss out. Projects should create and encourage visitation to a destination and fall into the categories of:

- Environmental - the development or enhancement of natural assets;
- Built - such as mixed

use, exhibition and sporting facilities;

- Transport - such as roads, rail networks, ports, airports; and
- Enabling - indigenous tourism development, plans and feasibility studies and programs to improve industry capability.

Project funding must be matched dollar-for-dollar by project organisers. Further information on the Tourism Demand Driver Infrastructure program, including guidelines and application process, are available on www.nsw.gov.au/tddi.

Applications close 2pm on Tuesday, 9 August 2016. All applications must be submitted using the online application form on the NSW eTendering website: www.etendering.nsw.gov.au.

NAIDOC Week - sharing our journeys

As many of you would be aware, this week is NAIDOC Week - a time to celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal people and culture to our diverse society.

This year's theme "Songlines - the living narrative of our nation" celebrates the cultural beginnings of the Dreamtime that connects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to country.

Songlines record the travels of ancestral spirits who 'sung' the land into life and have been kept alive through shared sacred stories and ceremonies for tens of thousands of years.

The first nations people used Songlines to navigate vast distances and map oceans, waterholes, rivers, birds, animals, plants and hunting grounds, with the paths recorded in traditional arts, crafts, dance, songs and stories.

I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to explore and celebrate how,

through Songlines, people remain connected to country.

Grants available to celebrate NSW Grandparents Day

Celebrate the valuable contribution grandparents make in our community, by applying for a share in \$100,000 in funding available under the NSW Grandparents Day Community event grants' program.

The NSW Government has allocated \$100,000 in funding for community groups, volunteer organisations and local councils to host events for NSW Grandparents Day on Sunday, 30 October, 2016.

Grandparents play a significant role in the home and the community, and this extra funding is the NSW Government's way of thanking them for their hard work. For the first time, grants of up to \$5000 are available to support NSW Grandparents Day activities this year. There are two

funding categories available this year through the grants program, offering:

- Tier 1 Grants of up to \$1000 for small-scale local community events or activities; and
- Tier 2 Grants from \$1001 to \$5000 for large-scale, region-wide events targeted at local government and larger community organisations.

Applications for the NSW Grandparents Day Community event grants program are now open and close on Friday, 12 August 2016. For more information, visit: www.ageing.nsw.gov.au.

Thumbs up
Thumbs up to all the members of Lions Clubs around the electorate. Linda and I were honoured to attend the Narrabri Lions Club dinner on Saturday night, and were reminded of the wonderful work that the Lions and Lionesses do for our communities. Thank you all for your selfless service.

(From front page)

"Private enterprise has also taken the opportunity to develop in the shadow of Siding Spring.

"We get all of this because we are smart enough to direct our artificial lighting downwards."

Warrumbungle National Park joins other international parks such as Death Valley National Park in the United States and Galloway Forest Park in Scotland as officially designated Dark Sky Parks.

Great outcome for tourism

"This is a great outcome for tourism and as a consequence of the successful application we should see an increase in tourism over the next few years if the results in other countries are anything to go by.

"This also will help in the keeping of our dark skies, which are essential to the ongoing research work of the Observatory.

"Dark skies are also important for native wildlife as well as for our astro-tourism market.

"Part of the successful proposal also requires the hosting of dark-sky related events, which will bring more people through the area, which is a positive as well.

"It is also exciting and fitting that we are the first dark sky park in Australia, given the wonderful commitment of our local community to the minimisation of light pollution."

-Donna Burton, Coona Astro Ventures

Astronomy tourism

"This is good news for the Coonabarabran area, not only for the research conducted at Siding Spring, but for astronomy tourism as well.

"With the Warrumbungles listed as an internationally recognised dark sky park, this will promote our area further around the world for amateur astronomers to visit the area.

"I have had many comments from visiting amateur astronomers that the skies here are as dark as anywhere in the world. We measure the sky brightness here at Warrumbungle Observatory which backs these comments up with data.

"Coonabarabran owes many thanks to Fred Watson and his team's efforts in the realisation of the dark sky site.

"With the commitment of \$100,000 from State planning on developing policies to protect our dark skies, I hope this will translate into minimising light pollution, particularly from the mining sector.

"We currently have a Council DCP which requires all development applications within a certain distance of Siding Spring Observatory to comply with the number of lights permitted, and that lights are not pointing up in the sky. The problem with it is once an application is approved, property owners can add more lights later on with what appears to be no repercussion from what I have observed.

"So, this is one thing that needs to be considered in any new planning regulations and their implementation."

-Peter Starr, Warrumbungle Observatory

In the Library



By Officer in Charge of Coonabarabran Library, Gary Furnell

School holidays in the library

On each Friday of the school holidays at 11am we'll be having a fun-filled hour of stories and craft aimed at infants' school-aged children. Our theme will be "Magic". There is a cost of \$2 per child.

Storytime for preschool-aged children will continue on Wednesdays only during the school holidays.

Our book sale has started!

Lots of people look forward to our July and January book sales, and our July school-holidays book sale has started and already we've sold

hundreds of super-cheap books, magazines, DVDs and music CDs. But every day we are filling the gaps with more items so multiple visits are worthwhile.

Nothing is more than \$1.10, and paperback fiction and magazines are only 25 cents. Happy customers are leaving the book sale with an armful of reading for only a few dollars.

Amnesty on overdue fees in July

The re-opening of Dubbo Library on Monday, 4 July, is being celebrated by an amnesty on overdue fees. So, if you have a library item

at home bring it back to the library as soon as possible and we'll waive any overdue fees. And if you returned items in the past, but still have the overdue fees, present your library card and we can waive those overdue fees too.

We want to add to the value of the extensive renovation of Dubbo Library - Macquarie Regional Library's largest branch, and the headquarters of MRL's administrative functions - with a fresh start for as many people as possible.

The amnesty of fees continues until 30 July.

Gary Furnell



Peter Nelson's WEATHER WATCH

June - very wet generally

Last month was very wet generally in our regions and a few places experienced their wettest June on record.

Lightning Ridge, with 224mms, was easily the wettest-ever June. In addition, no other month from March to October recorded rainfall as high as this June's 224mms at Lightning Ridge in the last 124 years of records.

Coonamble, with 176mms, also recorded its wettest-ever June in 138 years of records.

Dubbo, with 151mms, recorded its fourth-wettest June since 1871. Wetter Junes at Dubbo were in 1873, 1916 and 1945.

The excessive rain last month kept maximum temperatures one to two degrees below normal, but minimum temperatures at most places were two to three degrees above normal and, as a consequence, very few frosts occurred.

In inland regions of Qld, where places such as Charleville, Longreach and Isisford recorded their wettest-ever June in 140 years, the mean-minimum temperature

for the month was the highest on record for June, being over four degrees above normal.

The mean-minimum temperature across the northern part of the nation was also a record for June at many places, including five degrees above normal at Wyndham, WA.

Last month was also very wet over Tasmania, where many places had their wettest-ever June, while one place had its wettest-ever month.

The mean-minimum temperature for the month was also a record high for June at some places.

It was a very wet month at Sydney, 306mms, and at Gabo Island, 234mms. Both places had a wet January this year.

In Sydney, other similar cases were in 1949, 1951 and 1978, and at Gabo Island similar events were in 1910, 1934, 1963 and 1978.

Most of these episodes saw a continuation of above average rainfalls for the rest of the year in our regions.

The latter part of winter in both 1949 and 1951 saw widespread snow falls, even in Melbourne.

Last month was notable as cold and wet in the southern part of both WA and SA, and a few places had their coldest June for more than 10 years.

This may lead to colder and bleak conditions for July and August in our regions - snowfalls in the Warrumbungles?

Peter Nelson

Baradine Revisited



by JUDITH HADFIELD

Dick Burt was one of

Baradine's more colourful characters during the 1950s. I knew him well - that is, he and my husband, Charlie, were good friends, and if I didn't see a great deal of him face to face, we certainly shared many conversations. They both loved the telephone and rang each other - as well as many others - after tea at night. No TV then of course, and if Charlie was out fox shooting - which he did regularly all through the winter - Dick would chatter on to me. He just loved to talk.

Of course he was both a local businessman - he had a garage in Walker Street and he was the agent for Dodge and Peugeot motor cars - as well as being the regular correspondent who gathered the Baradine news for the Coonabarabran Times. But he did much more than sell motor cars and gather the local news. He did take a more than casual interest in the goings on in the town. He was a good speaker, ran meetings very well, and was involved in the Hall Committee and the town Bushfire Brigade - probably other things as well, but it was his involvement in establishing the local air service that was his most significant contribution to

our town.

It was his friendship with Arthur Butler, who had established an air service between Tooraweenah and Sydney, which was behind the expansion of that service to Baradine.

They had met during the war when both were flying in New Guinea, but while his friend, Arthur, had carried on flying after the war, preceding the establishment of Butler Air Transport (he had made a record-breaking flight from England and established the Empire Mail Service from Cootamundra to Charleville among other things), Dick had undertaken more conventional forms of employment.

However, when his friend established the airline, Butler Air Transport, so close to Baradine, establishment of a link to our town became a real possibility, and the fact that Baradine had already proved sufficiently community minded to establish quite a few community assets without outside help made this possible.

Various people rallied to find the time and energy to build the airport. I wasn't around here then, but Charlie told me that he brought his farming

plant into town to do his bit to prepare the airstrip, and apparently there was no shortage of other volunteers. I wish I could name them, but there's little chance there is anyone left who could.

My only contact with the airline was just after I became engaged to Charlie.

He had done his courting in Sydney, so soon after I had to make the trip to Baradine to meet my new relations. A return plane ticket cost me five pounds if I remember correctly - quite a large sum back in 1955 - but I thoroughly enjoyed the trip. The plane was a Heron, a small affair which carried only eight or 10 passengers, some mail and some medical supplies.

While Dick looked after the air service and his business, his wife, Phyllis, owned and operated the town's pharmacy. She was a delightful person and did a great job in an era when we did not always have a resident doctor.

Personality-wise, Dick was impressive. There was no doubt that he looked - and could act - the part of the then quite recent WW2 fighter pilot, but his temperament was more volatile. However, like him or not, he supplied the town with what was, at the time, a great asset.



Dick Burt was the driving force behind the establishment of a local air service in Baradine.

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FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK



A regular column by Warrumbungle Shire mayor, CR. PETER SHINTON

Over the last few weeks we have attended the Australian Local Government Association conference, meetings for Castlereagh Macquarie County Council and the Traffic Committee, met with UNESCO geologists, discussed the Geopark concept and opened NAIDOC Week.

Monday, 20 June, to Wednesday, 22 June, the general manager, Steve Loane, and I attended the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) National General Assembly held in Canberra. At this conference our Council moved a motion requiring the Federal Government to establish an emergency fund that would be accessible to the agency responsible for the cleanup and removal of asbestos during a disaster situation. This motion was carried by the delegates.

The conference focus this

year was that there is no longer a long-term focus on planning and building of necessary infrastructure to keep our country performing. As Federal and State Governments approach the election cycle they begin to promise infrastructure spending to shore up the marginal seats at the expense of planned infrastructure developed through Federal, State and regional plans.

Politics plays such an important role in infrastructure development and all levels and persuasions of government should accept the Infrastructure Australia report and focus on its recommendations.

Thursday, 23 June, I attended the Traffic Committee meeting held in Coonabarabran. At this meeting the previous decision to undertake a trial to control U-turning traffic at the corner of Binnia and Campbell Streets in Coolah will continue, after complaints were dealt with, and a request for "cyclists ahead" signage on the Castlereagh Highway at Mendooran will be investigated.

Monday, 27 June, the deputy mayor, Murray Coe, and I attended the Castlereagh Macquarie County Council (CMCC) meeting held in Coonabarabran. At this meeting we received reports concerning the future of the County Council system and how it will be either subsumed or continue as an associate non-voting member in the new system of joint organisations.

On another issue, the delegates resolved to allocate money in the next budget to purchase the necessary hardware to comply with the new Biosecurity Information System (BIS).

The BIS will allow local weed authorities to upload local weed information dealing with inspections, compliance and control activities and is a part of the new standards legislated by the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

Thursday, 30 June, I met up with two geologists in the Warrumbungle National Park to show them some of the iconic geological features that make it such a great example of an 'Ancient Shield Volcano'.

One of the geologists was Professor Patrick McKeever, from UNESCO, and the other was Angus Robinson, from the Australian Geological Society, who were visiting to determine

whether our environment would fit the UNESCO International Geopark model. Both of them were impressed by what they saw within the park and along the Timor Road on this whistle-stop tour.

Friday, 1 July, the mayors and general managers from Gilgandra, International Geopark model. Both of them were impressed by what they saw within the park and along the Timor Road on this whistle-stop tour.

The visiting UNESCO geologist, Professor McKeever is the global coordinator for UNESCO's Global Geoparks Network and he explained that the Geopark is not only an area exhibiting landscapes or

curiosities of international geological significance, but its connection with all aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage and with an ability to create innovative local enterprise, new jobs and new sources of revenue generated by ecotourism.

The whole Geopark concept has been raised in our area before, but not with as much passion and not with the UNESCO brand, which enables global recognition of how we are celebrating, preserving and sustaining our local earth heritage.

The three Councils will consider progressing the Geopark concept over the next 12 months to determine our collective interest before making an application.

Monday, 4 July, I received an e-mail from Professor Fred Watson thanking the Shire for its support for the "Dark Sky Park" classification for Warrumbungle National Park. This declaration is recognition for what the residents of Coonabarabran,

Coonamble and Gilgandra have been doing for years - that is, focusing artificial lighting downwards.

The existence and future of the Siding Spring Observatory complex is due to the fact that we have preserved our "Dark Skies" to ensure that the science produced and developed by our astronomers continues.

The Dark Sky Park brand and the fact that the Warrumbungle National Park is the first park in Australia to be declared should promote an increase in ecotourism.

Monday, 4 July, my wife Julie and I attended the flag-raising ceremony and the official opening of NAIDOC Week, before the celebratory morning tea.

During the ceremony some well-deserved awards were presented: Maureen Sulter - for Lifetime Contribution; to Margaret Robinson - Person of the Year; Allynta Sutherland - Young Achiever; and to Michelle Robinson - for Contribution to Community. Till next time.

Mystery novelist booked for Feast of Words

Coonabarabran High School's annual Feast of Words Writer's Festival is drawing near, with writer, Sulari Gentill, one of three special guests booked for the July festival.

Sulari Gentill is best known for mystery novels. She was born in Sri Lanka and grew up in Brisbane, before studying Astrophysics and Law at university. As she puts it though, she "just wanted to tell stories", and after a number of years practising corporate law she started to focus more on her writing.

By 2009 she had been short-listed for a number of awards, including the NSW Genre Fiction Award and the Varuna Fellowship, but once she became involved with Pantera Press things really started to take off for her.

Sulari is best known for her "Rowland Sinclair" mystery series, set in 1930's Australia, and her Young Adult trilogy that starts with "Chasing Odysseus", an adventurous retelling of Homer's "The Odyssey".

She is a frequent guest at writers' festivals and events throughout Australia, and loves to teach others about the art and craft of writing

as well. When she's not travelling she makes her home on a farm in the Snowy Mountains with her husband and children.

Sulari is at home in the country so she will certainly be at home in Coonabarabran.

The Feast of Words dinner will be held on Thursday 21st July, at 6.30pm for 7pm.

Dinner

The Feast of Words dinner will be held on Thursday, 21 July, at Birds of a Feather Cafe, featuring a two-course meal plus nibbles. Tickets are available from Birds of a Feather, Prezies, or the High School Office.

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



Writer, Sulari Gentill will be one of three special guests to feature at Coonabarabran High School's Feast of Words festival.

FEAST OF WORDS 2016

An evening with:
Jesse Blackadder
Sulari Gentill and
Ellie Marney

Join the writers for dinner at **BIRDS OF A FEATHER**

on **Thursday, 21st July**

6.30 for 7.00pm ~ \$50 per head

• Hors d'oeuvres & 2 courses • BYO drinks

Tickets available from Birds of a Feather,

Prezies or Coonabarabran High School

RSVP: MONDAY, 18 JULY

Proceeds from this dinner help fund the Festival

Proudly supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund

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