

11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY DIVISION REPORTS

ITEM 11.1	URBAN NIGHT SKY PLACE - PALM BEACH HEADLAND
REPORTING MANAGER	ACTING EXECUTIVE MANAGER ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE
TRIM FILE REF	2019/175860
ATTACHMENTS	NIL

SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To report on the funding and resource requirements associated with applying for, and subsequently maintaining, designation of the Palm Beach Headland as an Urban Night Sky Place under the International Dark Sky Places Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Urban Night Sky Place (UNSP) is defined by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) as a municipal park, open space, observing site or other similar property adjacent to large urban areas whose planning and design actively promote an authentic night time experience in the midst of significant artificial light. These places actively demonstrate lighting best practice and educate the public of the benefits of proper outdoor lighting that ensures public safety whilst also minimising potential harm to the natural night time environment.

From preliminary findings, the IDA has deemed the Palm Beach Headland as a suitable area for designation as an UNSP. This proposed location includes public open space within Governor Philip Park, Barrenjoey Lighthouse area within the Kuring-gai Chase National Park and commercial operations including the Palm Beach Golf Club and several restaurants.

Council was approached by a local resident and Dark Sky Defender Award winner, Marnie Ogg to discuss the potential for designating the Palm Beach Headland as an UNSP. A Notice of Motion from Cr Ferguson on this issue was considered at Council's meeting of 26 February 2019. Council subsequently resolved that staff investigate registering Palm Beach Headland as an UNSP under the International Dark Sky Places Program and a report be provided to Council outlining any required funding and resource impacts associated with this registration.

As part of its consultation obligations, Council would need to convene a working group with representation from stakeholders including Council, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS), local businesses, residents and community groups to ensure early engagement in the process. Consultation with the broader community will also be required.

There are two main stages to the UNSP process for Council to work through: 1) Preparation of the application which will include developing an understanding of the night time conditions, making an inventory of existing lighting, developing a lighting management plan and documenting baseline sky measurements, and 2) Following approval of the application, implementation is expected to require renewing lighting in the area, installing signage, preparing an annual report, undertaking engagement activities and developing publications/promotional material.

There will be staff resource and funding implications for both the preparation of the application, as well as the implementation of any works/investigations. It is anticipated that the consultation process, site assessment and initial preparation of the application can be undertaken within existing staff resources. However, the lighting inventory, lighting management plan and new lighting will require additional budget. While firm costs are not yet available, they are anticipated to be in the order of \$50,000 and are proposed to be funded from the Pittwater (SRV) Energy Saving Initiatives & Retrofits Program.

RECOMMENDATION OF DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

That Council:

- A. Recognise Palm Beach Headland as a potential Urban Night Sky Place
 - B. Progress the application process using existing staff resources
 - C. Allocate \$50,000 from the Pittwater (SRV) Energy Saving Initiatives & Retrofits Program towards the completion of the necessary public lighting work required for Palm Beach Headland to be designated an Urban Night Sky Place.
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REPORT

BACKGROUND

An Urban Night Sky Place (UNSP) is defined by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) as a municipal park, open space, observing site or other similar property adjacent to large urban areas whose planning and design actively promote an authentic night time experience in the midst of significant artificial light. These places actively demonstrate lighting best practice and educate the public of the benefits of proper outdoor lighting that ensures public safety whilst also minimising potential harm to the natural night time environment.

Currently there are no designated UNSP's anywhere in the world, however there are a few being investigated in other countries. If accepted, the proposed location at Palm Beach would likely be Australia's and potentially the worlds' first UNSP.

From preliminary findings, the IDA has deemed the Palm Beach Headland a suitable area for designation as an UNSP. This proposed location encompasses Barrenjoey Headland and Governor Phillip Park (refer Figure 1) and includes public open space, Barrenjoey Lighthouse within the Kuring-gai Chase National Park and commercial operations including the Palm Beach Golf Club and several restaurants.

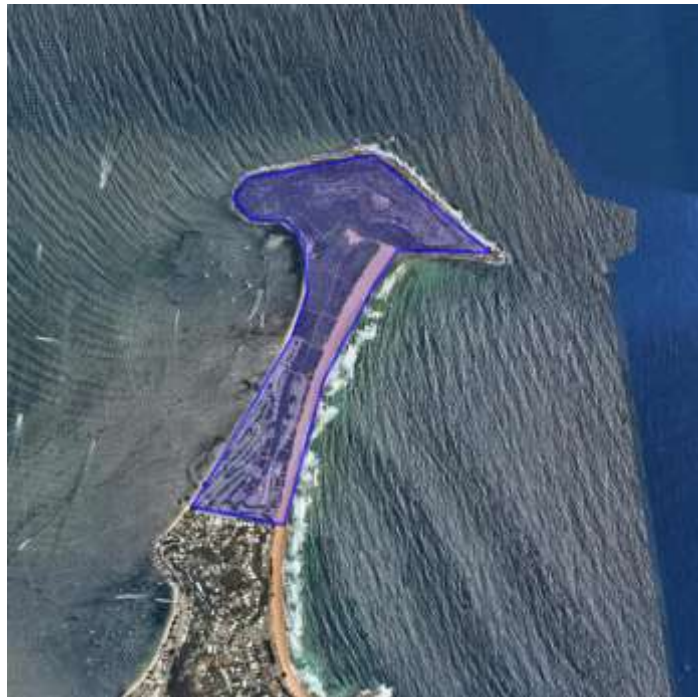


Figure 1: Location of proposed UNSP

In order for a site to be considered as an UNSP it must:

- Be located within 50 km of the edge of the continuously-built area with a permanent population of 10,000 or more people.
- Have a geographic situation and/or landscaping that is sufficient to mitigate the effects of any glare or light trespass from outdoor lighting on immediately adjacent properties.
- Allow for regular, night time public access to the site with or without supervision. A portion of designated land may meet the access requirement or access must be available for a reasonable fraction of the length of the hours between sunset and sunrise. In some cases, such as when working with areas that protect endangered wildlife, this requirement may be adjusted.

- Engage visitors with direct interpretation of the value of natural night time darkness and the importance of quality outdoor lighting practices.
- Identify the managing agency of the place.

The application is required to provide evidence of eligibility which includes a map of the area, site photography establishing night time conditions in/near the place, a summary of the public access policy, a lighting management plan, a formal lighting inventory, a description of interpretive programs, signage, a letter of nomination from an IDA member, documentation of a baseline sky quality measurement survey and future plans for the site.

As part of its consultation obligations, Council would need to convene a working group with representation from stakeholders including Council, NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS), local business, residents and community groups to ensure early engagement in the process.

There are two main stages to the UNSP process for Council to work through: 1) Preparation of the application which will include developing an understanding of the night time conditions, making an inventory of existing lighting, developing a lighting management plan and documenting baseline sky measurements, and 2) Following approval of the application, implementation is expected to require renewing lighting in the area, installing signage, preparing an annual report, undertaking engagement activities and developing publications/promotional material.

The designation of the UNSP provides a number of benefits to the community, including:

- The demonstration that sustainable lighting principles, when implemented, can reduce light pollution to the night sky.
- Education and community engagement on the benefits of sustainable lighting principles.
- An upgrade of existing lighting with the benefits of increased efficiency, reduced costs and carbon emissions and reduction of upward light spill to the night sky.
- An alignment with the NSW Department of Planning & Environment who actively support the concept of Dark Night Sky Planning and promote education programs including 'Dark Sky for Teachers' and 'Dark Sky for Kids'.

LINK TO COUNCIL STRATEGY

This report relates to the Community Strategic Plan Outcome of Places for People Goal 9 - *Our community is healthy, active and enjoys a broad range of creative, sporting and recreational opportunities.*

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There will be budget implications both during the preparation of the application and upon implementation program should the location be designated as an UNSP.

The preparation of the application will require funding to prepare a lighting inventory, develop a lighting management plan and undertake baseline sky quality measurements. Funding is proposed to be sourced from funded from the Pittwater (SRV) Energy Saving Initiatives & Retrofits Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Successful management of the area proposed as a location for the UNSP has potential to produce direct environmental benefits from the implementation of the lighting management plan through reducing upward light spill, lowering electricity consumption and through the removal of old globes, reducing mercury in the environment.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Council and NPWS manage the land within the proposed location. A number of commercial businesses also operate in the location, that include the operation of lights at night. A Memorandum of Understanding, or equivalent, between stakeholders would be required to ensure each party was willing to actively participate in the implementation of works as required in the lighting management plan

Consultation with the community is necessary to determine the level of support for the proposal. This would at a minimum include engaging with local businesses, residents and community groups prior to progressing the application.

Council has received two letters of support from community groups in the Palm Beach area and NPWS has confirmed in principle support for the application and offered to deliver an annual community engagement activity as part of the UNSP program. Letters of support have been received from the North Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Pittwater Natural Heritage Association.

GOVERNANCE AND RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The area of the proposal currently supports regular, night time public access without supervision. A risk assessment will be undertaken to identify and mitigate risks associated with designating the area as an UNSP. This would identify and assess the potential impacts of the proposal and issues such as community safety and environmental impacts would be considered. Council's Community Safety Committee will be consulted during this process to ensure that relevant public safety issues are satisfactorily addressed.

The use is permissible under the Governor Phillip Park Plan of Management. National Parks and Wildlife Service is supportive in principle of the proposal.

Council will be required to provide evidence of commitment to quality outdoor lighting in the nominated location as shown by the inclusion in appropriate management documents such as the Governor Phillip Park Plan of Management, stating, that Council recognises dark skies as an important natural, cultural and/or scientific resource. It is anticipated this can be done at the time the relevant documents are due for revision.