



## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Winton becomes Queensland's first International Dark-Sky Community

**Outback town recognised globally for its commitment to protecting the night sky and advancing dark-sky tourism in regional Queensland.**

- Winton is officially Queensland's first International Dark-Sky Community, certified by DarkSky International.
- The town joins one of only two Dark Sky Places in Queensland, alongside The Jump-Up Dark-Sky Sanctuary and becomes Australia's eighth Dark Sky Place.
- Winton's landscapes, clear night skies and cultural heritage make it ideal for astro-tourism and environmental preservation.
- The Winton Dark-Sky Community Initiatives include responsible lighting guidelines, audits, retrofits and community education programs.
- The certification strengthens the region's position as a premier destination for dark-sky tourism and promotes astro-friendly development across Outback Queensland.
- Images and video footage are available and can be accessed via the following link:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/cfgt8pfk1j1jhqfj8o5u/AEicYClaoJYTudoTQf8WfGM?rlkey=vkhtwvr8wezskdoe8tezpiy4p&st=ppew5x94&dl=0>

The Outback town of Winton has officially been designated Queensland's first International Dark-Sky Community by DarkSky International – a major milestone for science, tourism and environmental conservation. Winton now joins one of only two Dark Sky Places in Queensland, alongside The Jump-Up Dark-Sky Sanctuary at the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History (also in Winton) and becomes the eighth Dark Sky Place in Australia.

Dan Oakley, Policy and Destination Senior Manager from DarkSky said, "Winton's community spirit and participation for protecting dark skies really shone through in their application. Their examples and efforts to come together as a community was well evidenced and put a smile on the DarkSky Places Committee faces. We look forward to what the community will do next and how they can inspire more places to follow their example."

Located in Queensland's Channel Country, Winton is renowned for its vast horizons, rich cultural heritage and natural attractions, including dinosaurs, boulder opals and rugged mesas that frame some of the Southern Hemisphere's clearest night skies. Situated 178km from Longreach and 1,360km from Brisbane, the town is the home of *Waltzing Matilda* and the birthplace of QANTAS. Spanning 53,814 square kilometres (around the size of Croatia) with a population of just 1,134, Winton captures the vastness and unique character of the Australian Outback.

Minister for the Environment and tourism and Minister for Science and Innovation said Winton was a huge tourism drawcard for Queensland that just kept getting better.

"Queensland is the Home of the Holiday and our Outback communities are doing a tremendous job cementing their reputation as a must-visit destination," Minister Andrew Powell said.

"This achievement for Winton Shire is the direct result of the communities' drive, spirit and respect of our natural environment and it's something they should be immensely proud of.

"The Crisafulli and Albanese Governments have just launched a new tourism campaign, Outback Queensland. It's Something Else. which features Winton, and I encourage travellers from right across the country to visit this great outback town and see it's great night sky for yourself."

To achieve Dark Sky Community status, Winton Shire Council, local organisations and community members formed the Winton Dark-Sky Community Initiative. The town adopted responsible outdoor lighting guidelines, conducted audits and retrofits and ran community education programs on light pollution. Residents and visitors participated in nighttime events to measure sky quality and raise awareness about protecting the night sky. In February 2025, Winton Shire Council introduced a comprehensive Dark Sky Lighting Policy, later resolving to amend its Planning Scheme in November 2025, becoming the first local government in Queensland to embed Dark Sky provisions.

Winton Shire Council Mayor Cathy White said: "This recognition is a testament to what can be achieved when a community comes together to protect something universal – the night sky. Our dark skies are part of what makes Winton special and this certification celebrates our commitment to preserving them for generations to come.

"This is about benchmarking a regional centre and future-proofing our region. As night skies become increasingly rare worldwide, we are making sure our stars remain free from light pollution for visitors from across the globe to enjoy."

Australian Age of Dinosaurs, Head of Museum, Naomi Miles said: "It has taken three years and the effort of many but with our exceptional dark skies and strong community support, Winton has made it happen. We're proud to be the first Dark-Sky Community in Queensland and look forward to others following suit."

Looking ahead, Winton Shire Council will work with regional partners to promote dark-sky-friendly development and encourage other Outback communities to pursue Dark Sky certification. These efforts will position Winton as a premier dark-sky destination, with a long-term goal of creating a 'Dark Sky Highway' along the Outback Way, connecting communities across Australia.

### **About the International Dark Sky Places Program**

Founded in 2001, the International Dark Sky Places Program is a non-regulatory and voluntary program encouraging communities, parks, and protected areas worldwide to preserve and protect dark sites through effective lighting policies, environmentally responsible outdoor lighting, and public education. When used indiscriminately, artificial light can disrupt ecosystems, impact human health, waste money and energy, contribute to climate change, and block our view and connection to the universe. Winton now joins more than 230 Places that have demonstrated robust community support for dark sky advocacy and strive to protect the night from light pollution. Learn more by visiting <https://darksky.org/what-we-do/international-dark-sky-places/>.

### **About DarkSky International**

The mission of DarkSky is to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting. Learn more at [darksky.org](https://darksky.org).

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