

Newsletter 1

RASNZ Dark Skies Group

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular update of activities undertaken by the Dark Skies Group. Until now communication amongst the group has been intermittent at best.

This first volume contains an update of activities during the past 12 months, and some comments about recent happenings. This content is essentially my presentation at the RASNZ Conference held in New Plymouth.

Just over a year ago RASNZ became a signatory to the NZ Urban Design Protocol. This is a Ministry for the Environment initiative to encourage improvement in urban design. As light pollution of the night sky is a negative impact resulting from design decisions by urban designers, the protocol is seen as an avenue for RASNZ to make our concerns known.

July 05: The Royal Society of NZ made a presentation to the OECD Environmental Review of New Zealand on our behalf.

August 05: "Urbanism Down Under Conference" held in Wellington. Marilyn Head attended on one day, representing RASNZ.

The first Urban Design Champions Workshop was held in Wellington. Steve Butler attended. An informal Dark Skies meeting was held with Wellington Astronomical Society members. This meeting was valuable and a list of tasks and ideas was generated.

The group were invited to supply a judge for the 2005 Annual Lighting Design Awards for the Illumination Engineering Society of Australia and New Zealand. Grant Christie and Jennie McCormick agreed to judge, but unfortunately there were no suitable entries for a Dark Sky award.

A submission was made to the Ministry of Justice draft "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design New Zealand Guidelines". This Guideline was developed as an Urban Design Protocol project and as signatories we were invited to comment. The final version of this guideline was launched in November 2005 and contains a short reference to the need for glare free lighting.

September 05: The RASNZ Action Plan was submitted to the Ministry for Environment

Urban Design Protocol team. This action plan contains our commitment under the Protocol.

- Web site including resources for good lighting techniques and equipment.
- Brochures and CD Tool Kit.
- Involvement in Good Lighting Awards. Includes own and existing industry awards.
- Education / Awareness
- Mapping of NZ light pollution levels

October 05: The Christchurch Press ran an article regarding a resident who wished to use lighting "to make Christchurch shine like the streets of Venice". A letter was sent to the Press reminding the Christchurch City Council that as signatories to the Urban Design Protocol they had obligations to ensure efficient resource use and to minimise impacts, and that it was the rate payers who would end up paying for the electricity.

Several RASNZ members attended the Ministry for the Environment's 2005 Road Show meetings, "Working Towards a Sustainable Environment". As well as joining others for discussions on a range of environmental topics including light pollution, they enjoyed a free breakfast!

November 06 I was invited to attend a presentation at the Southland Teachers College Outpost Environmental Course where a group of trainee teachers were researching a Light Pollution Project.

December 05: TV coverage of plans for a Heritage Sky Park proposed for Tekapo. Good work here by the staff of Mt John observatory.

February 06: Brian Loader attended the second Urban Design Champions' Workshop held in Christchurch.

March 06: RASNZ Action Statement chosen for MFE Website. See:

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/urban/urban-action-plan-review-mar06/html/index.html>

April 06: Written Submission to Invercargill Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP)

A series of letters to Southland Times complained about Te Anau lighting in a new development. All the lights are on for only a few houses – waste of energy. A very encouraging response was printed in the paper from the Asset Manager of the Southland District Council (SDC) promising to review energy use throughout Southland and to identify sky friendly lighting. The SDC are

signatories to the Communities for Climate Protection (CCP). A New Zealand Government initiative delivered by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives – Australia/New Zealand. Part of international Cities for Climate Protection Campaign.

May 06: Written Submission to Southland District Council LTCCP.
Bob Evans presented at the Invercargill City Council LTCCP hearings.

June 06: Bob Evans presented at Southland District Council LTCCP hearings.
A congratulatory letter was sent to Transit New Zealand regarding energy efficient and sky friendly lighting for a motorway extension North of Auckland.

Throughout the year....

Four requests were received for advice on particular lighting issues such as car dealer yard lighting, or new subdivision lighting.

Comments:

Toward the end of the year a couple of new opportunities for improvement in New Zealand's lighting became apparent. The CCP program mentioned above can be found at: <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=3920>

Another promising program is the Lighting Efficiency Stakeholder Group to be established by the Electricity Commission. A brief description and Terms of Reference can be found at <http://www.electricitycommission.govt.nz/advisorygroups/pjtteam/lesg> We will keep an eye on the establishment of this group and submissions will be made.

A new word for you all: Scotobiology - The Biology Of Darkness. An interesting site is <http://www.muskokaheritage.org/ecology-night/scotobiology-article.asp>

For an interesting look at Earth Lights on Google Maps go to <http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/~pesti/night/>
Use the arrows to pan around the map and the + and – buttons to zoom in or out.

Have a look at our website, there have been a few additions lately.

<http://rasnz.org.nz/DarkSkies.htm>

Check the photo gallery. If you have any examples of good or bad lighting I would like to use them.

That's all for now.

Best regards,

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