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MEDIA RELEASE

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WARRUMBUNGLE FIRST DARK SKY PARK IN AUSTRALIA

Warrumbungle National Park in Central Western NSW has been declared Australia's first Dark Sky Park, recognising and protecting its key role in astronomical research.

Planning Minister Rob Stokes and Environment Minister Mark Speakman welcomed the park's new status, following confirmation from the International Dark Sky Association.

Mr Stokes said the park's dark sky qualities will be protected with \$100,000 in funding to control light pollution through implementation of updated planning policies. A new Dark Sky Planning Guideline has also been developed with the Australian Astronomical Observatory as part of the NSW Government's review of state planning policies.

"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."

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.

Member for Barwon Kevin Humphries welcomed the Dark Sky Park declaration.

"Warrumbungle National Park is a place our local community has always treasured, and I'm delighted it's now been recognised in this way," Mr Humphries said.

Australian Astronomical Observatory Head of Lighting and Environment Professor Fred Watson led the nomination for the Warrumbungle National Park to be Australia's first 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.

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.