



Protecting Our Dark Skies: Indigenous Knowledges and the Law

Dr. Shea Esterling
shea.esterling@canterbury.ac.nz



Research Aims:

- To draw attention to terrestrial and LEO light pollution and its cultural, social and economic impacts.
- To develop model legislation for the governance of dark skies in Aotearoa New Zealand that incorporates mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge).

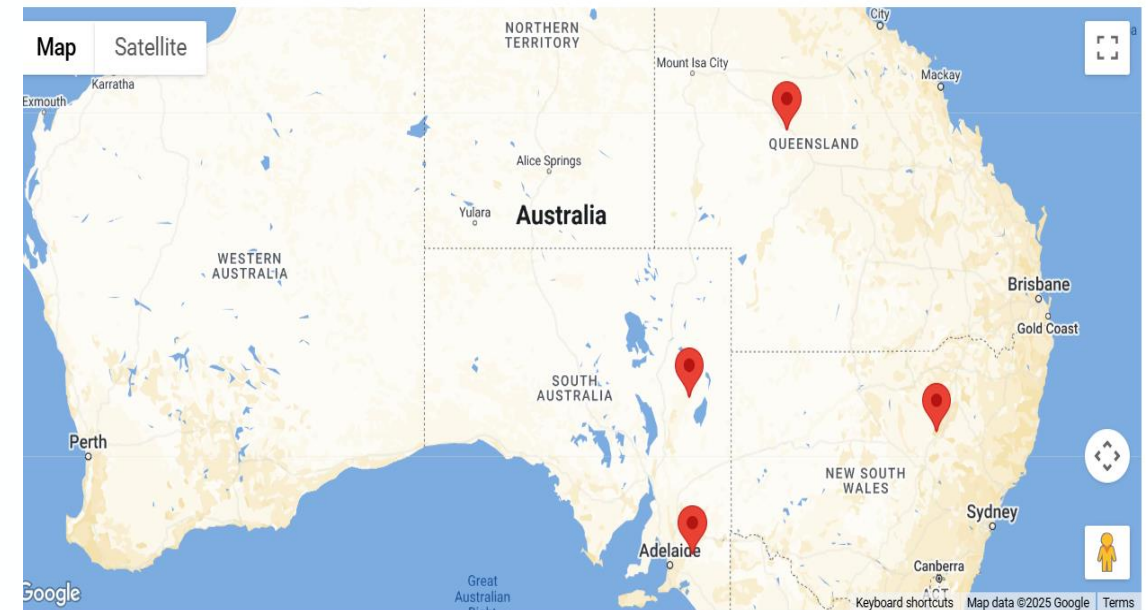
Protecting Our Dark Skies: Indigenous Knowledges and the Law



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See <https://www.borrinfoundation.nz/travel-and-learning-award-for-shea-esterling/>

Research Sample Design: International Dark Sky Places [IDSP]



Research Methods

Semi-structured Interviews

- astronomers,
- local Indigenous Peoples,
- park operators/ individuals involved with IDSP,
- policy people, and
- tourism operators

Thematic Analysis

- Local Indigenous Peoples impact & influence in the dark sky site
- The impacts of the dark sky designation on the population, both indigenous and non-indigenous

Initial Research Results

- Process of IDSP certification complicated for those without a technical / astronomy background.
- Certification paperwork and Dark Sky International website is not very user friendly for the general public.
- Certification is source of community pride.
- No involvement of Indigenous Peoples in certification as an IDSP.
 - UNDRIP violations
- Economic benefit: certification makes site a destination for astro-tourism.
 - Stressed economic benefits should flow back to the community.
- Cultural benefit: certification creates opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to reconnect with culture and retain traditional knowledges and customs.
 - Light pollution= threat to indigenous knowledges
- Cultural benefit: certification creates opportunities for non-indigenous peoples to learn about indigenous knowledges, within limits set by the Indigenous Peoples.
 - Dark skies preserve and strengthen cultural diversity and harmony.

Recommendations

- Mandate authentic indigenous involvement in process of IDSP certification and maintenance
 - Guided by UNDRIP
- Dark sky as an opportunity to counteract some of the impacts of colonization, and a revitalisation of indigenous cultures, languages, and customs.