

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Skills and TAFE
Minister for Regional Development



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DREAMTIME STARGAZING TO DAZZLE GIPPSLAND

A Gunaikurnai artist from East Gippsland is helping all Australians understand the connection between life and the night sky through cultural storytelling, thanks to a new stargazing project backed by the Allan Labor Government.

Minister for Regional Development Gayle Tierney today announced the launch of the Dark Skies project, which gives people the opportunity to see the Milky Way from under the Gippsland sky. The initiative is supported by \$267,000 from the Labor Government's *Local Economy Recovery* program and Destination Gippsland.

Artwork by local Gunaikurnai Monero artist Alfred Hudson features on 12 signs across Gippsland guiding people to the sites that are ideal for stargazing. The signage includes Alfred's *Mother's Night Sky* artwork from 2022 which illustrates how stars represent the seasons, time for hunting, eating and moving across Country in Gunaikurnai culture.

For amateur astronomers not based in Gippsland or anyone interested in taking a trip to learn more about the stars, a new website reveals the best locations to see the stars and shares more of the story behind the artwork.

The *Mother's Night Sky* artwork also features an emu representing the cultural story of a boy stuck in a river who was saved by an emu who sacrificed itself and became the Southern Cross. The artwork also features Bogong moth decorations which were seasonal food for Gunaikurnai people, and an owl to represent the wisdom of the Elders.

The Dark Skies project is set to attract more visitors to Gippsland at the 12 marked locations ideal for stargazing – in Mallacoota, Nowa Nowa, Orbost, Cann River, Point Hicks, Cape Conran, Marlo, Buchan, Bruthen, Omeo, Lake Tyers, Dargo and Loch Sport.

Around six million people visited the Gippsland region last year, injecting over \$1.5 billion into the local economy.

Two mobile observatories including telescopes, binoculars and torches are also available for special public stargazing events, paving the way for more astronomy events in Gippsland that will be a boost to the region's economy.

The project is part of the \$68.6 million *Local Economic Recovery* program which is jointly funded by the Allan Labor Government and the Albanese Labor Government. Destination Gippsland is a non-for-profit company created in 2008 with support from the Victorian Government to back Gippsland's tourism sector.

Projects like this are part of the Labor Government's investment of more than \$45 billion in rural and regional Victoria over the past decade. For more information, go to rdv.vic.gov.au and stargazinggippsland.com.au.

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Gayle Tierney

"Regional Victoria is a special place with the perfect conditions for stargazing, and this project will encourage even more tourists to get out and enjoy our regions."

Quote attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

"Gippsland has stunning stargazing sites and the Dark Skies Project will share First Peoples' unique cultural connection to the magic of the night sky, and boost tourism and the local economy."

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