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**Government Response to
Report of Petitions Committee
on
Petition of John Hearnshaw: New Zealand needs a national law to
limit light pollution and promote dark skies**

Presented to the House of Representatives

In accordance with Standing Order 256

Government response to Report of The Petitions Committee on Petition of John Hearnshaw: New Zealand needs a national law to limit light pollution and promote dark skies

Introduction

- 1 The Government has carefully considered the Petitions Committee's (the Committee) report entitled *Petition of John Hearnshaw: New Zealand needs a national law to limit light pollution and promote dark skies* (the report).
- 2 The Committee's recommendations by nature are local and long term. Due to other priorities on the Government's resource management reform work programme, the Government is not proposing any additional action in response to the report at this time.
- 3 The Government responds to the report in accordance with Standing Order 256.

Recommendations and government response

- 4 Recommendation 1: that the Government investigate how to limit the growth of artificial light at night in New Zealand, including considering the option of establishing a set of national guidelines that could be voluntarily adopted by local councils.
- 5 Response: The Government acknowledges the Committee in their findings on artificial light at night, and the points provided in submissions on artificial light at night. The Government also recognises some of the benefits of reducing artificial light highlighted in the report, including better human health, benefits to nocturnal fauna, economic and environmental benefits from less wasted electricity, promoting dark sky tourism and making it easier to see the stars.
- 6 In relation to Recommendation 1, the Government is not looking into voluntary guidelines for local councils on artificial light at this time. The Resource Management Act (1991) provides flexibility for districts and regions to manage this at a local level. Some councils already have in place guidelines on lighting to support their region as a dark sky area or reserve. Different areas of the country may have different objectives and considerations for artificial lighting, whether that be for dark skies or for promoting safety in urban areas. Therefore, any national approach would need to reflect and allow for those differences.
- 7 Outside of the resource management system, the Government is investigating what the requirements are for New Zealand to be nationally accredited with DarkSky International to be a 'dark sky' nation.

- 8 Recommendation 2: that the Government begin this work in 2025 because developing an appropriate solution will take some time, and artificial light at night in New Zealand is increasing significantly each year.
- 9 Response: The Government is not looking to include this work in 2025. The Government has a comprehensive work programme on resource management reform. This reform aims to replace the Resource Management Act (1991) as well as update the suite of national regulation. Any review of how artificial light is controlled would sensibly follow this phase of significant reform. Given the timeframe and scale of work involved in resource management reform, priority cannot be given to addressing artificial light during the current reform phase. While a national approach could provide greater certainty, future work would need to be undertaken to assess the extent of the potential benefits of guidelines including for local government and communities. The Ministry for the Environment will consider the case for future work alongside other potential topics beyond 2025.
- 10 Recommendation 3: if the Government develops a set of national guidelines for light at night, the guidelines focus on the development of new facilities, buildings and streets.
- 11 Response: The Government is not looking to develop a set of national guidelines at this time.

Conclusion

- 12 The Government is not proposing any additional action in response to the report at this time.

Timing of the Government response

- 13 The Government response must be presented to the House by 4 March 2025.