Who’s looking at them anyway?

Managing the impacts of illuminated signage at night

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Work prepared in collaboration with Jackson Stigwood.

Original report prepared on behalf of the City of Melbourne

Prepared on Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Country.

March 2025

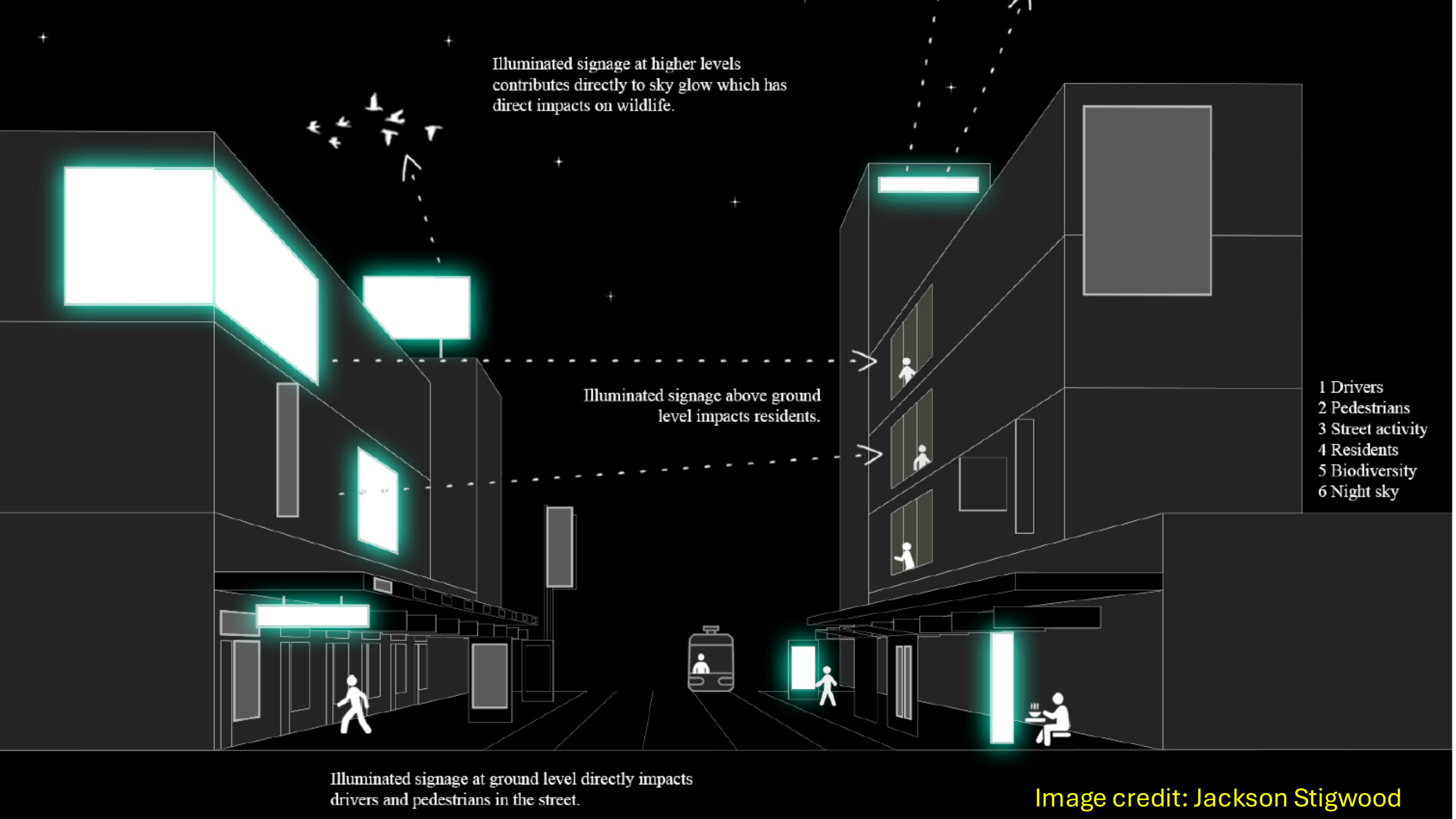
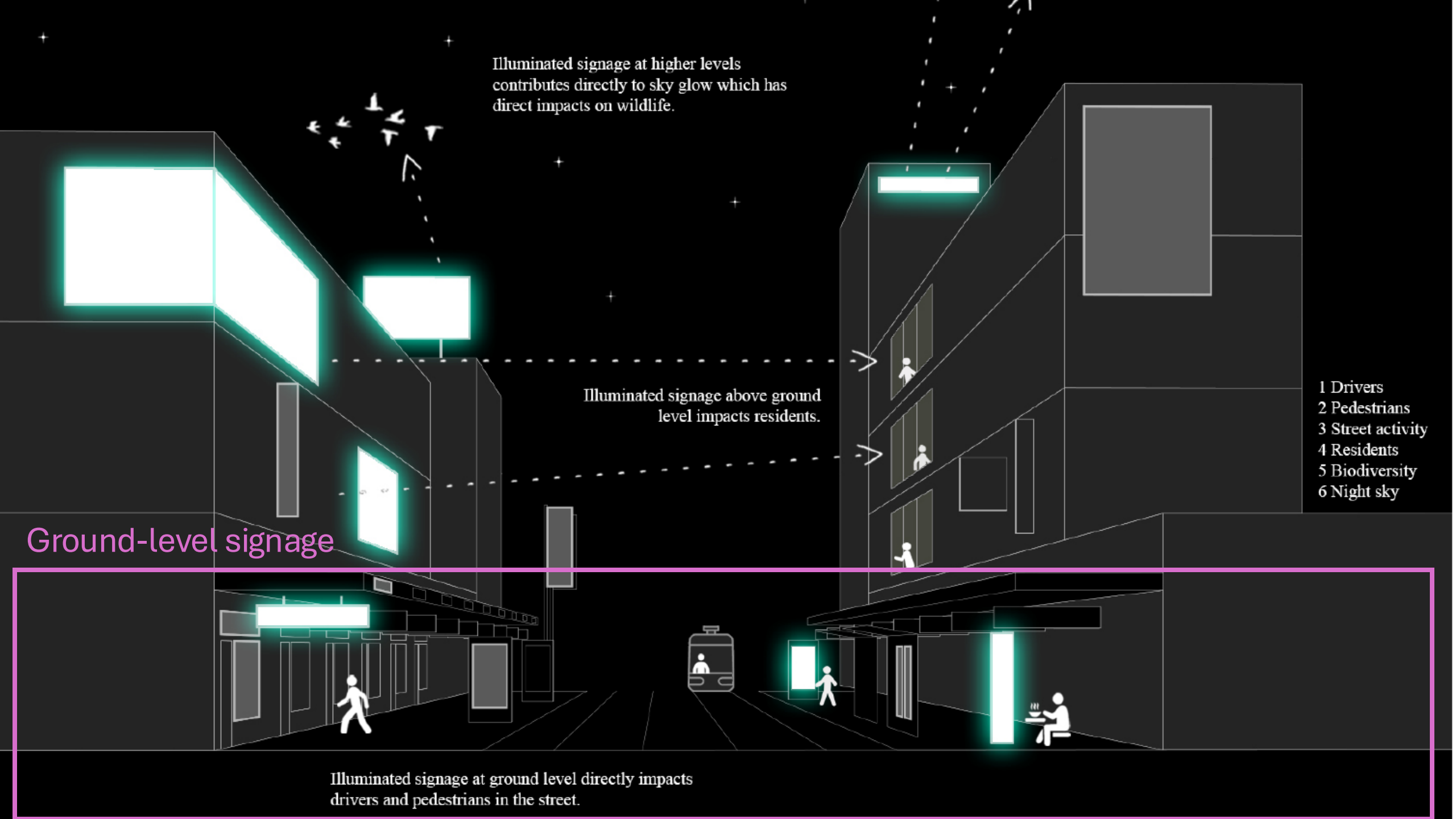


Image credit: Jackson Stigwood


Illuminated signage at higher levels contributes directly to sky glow which has direct impacts on wildlife.
Illuminated signage above ground level impacts residents.
1 Drivers
2 Pedestrians
3 Street activity
4 Residents
5 Biodiversity
6 Night sky
Ground-level signage
Illuminated signage at ground level directly impacts drivers and pedestrians in the street.

Ground level analysis of illuminated signage

Multiple locations in the CBD

Size of signs measured

% of sign as proportion of overall street frontage measured

Analysis of light levels

Ground level analysis of illuminated signage

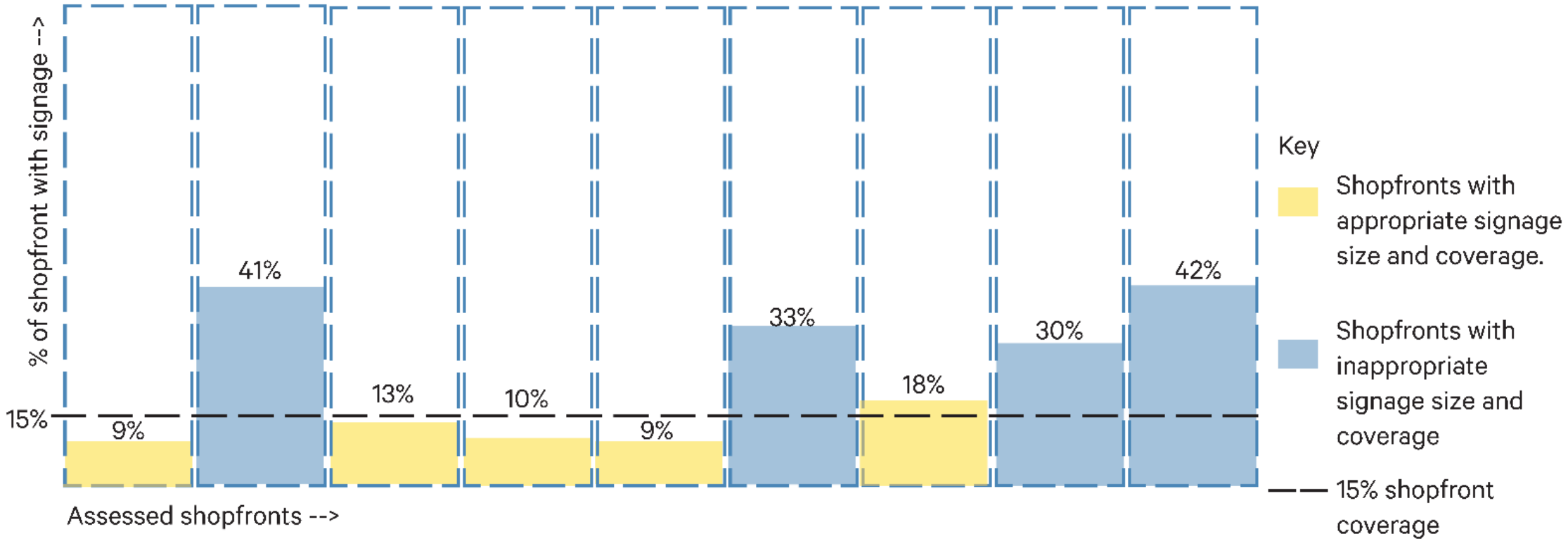


Figure 3. Graph showing the analysis of various shopfronts within the Melbourne CBD.

Ground-level recommendations

Maximum illuminance levels set for curfew and non-curfew hours, with measurement locations defined.

If the existing vertical illuminance value measured onsite is equal to or exceeds the allowed maximum illuminance level, no additional illumination contribution is permitted from new signage.

Max. 1 sign per premises, max size (1 x 1.8m) and max 15% of shopfront.

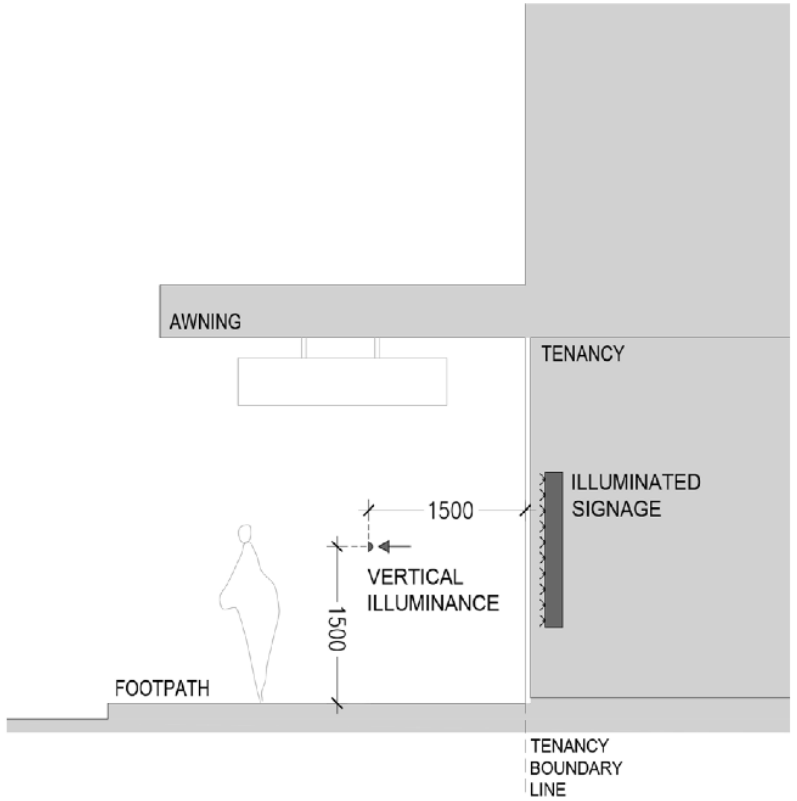
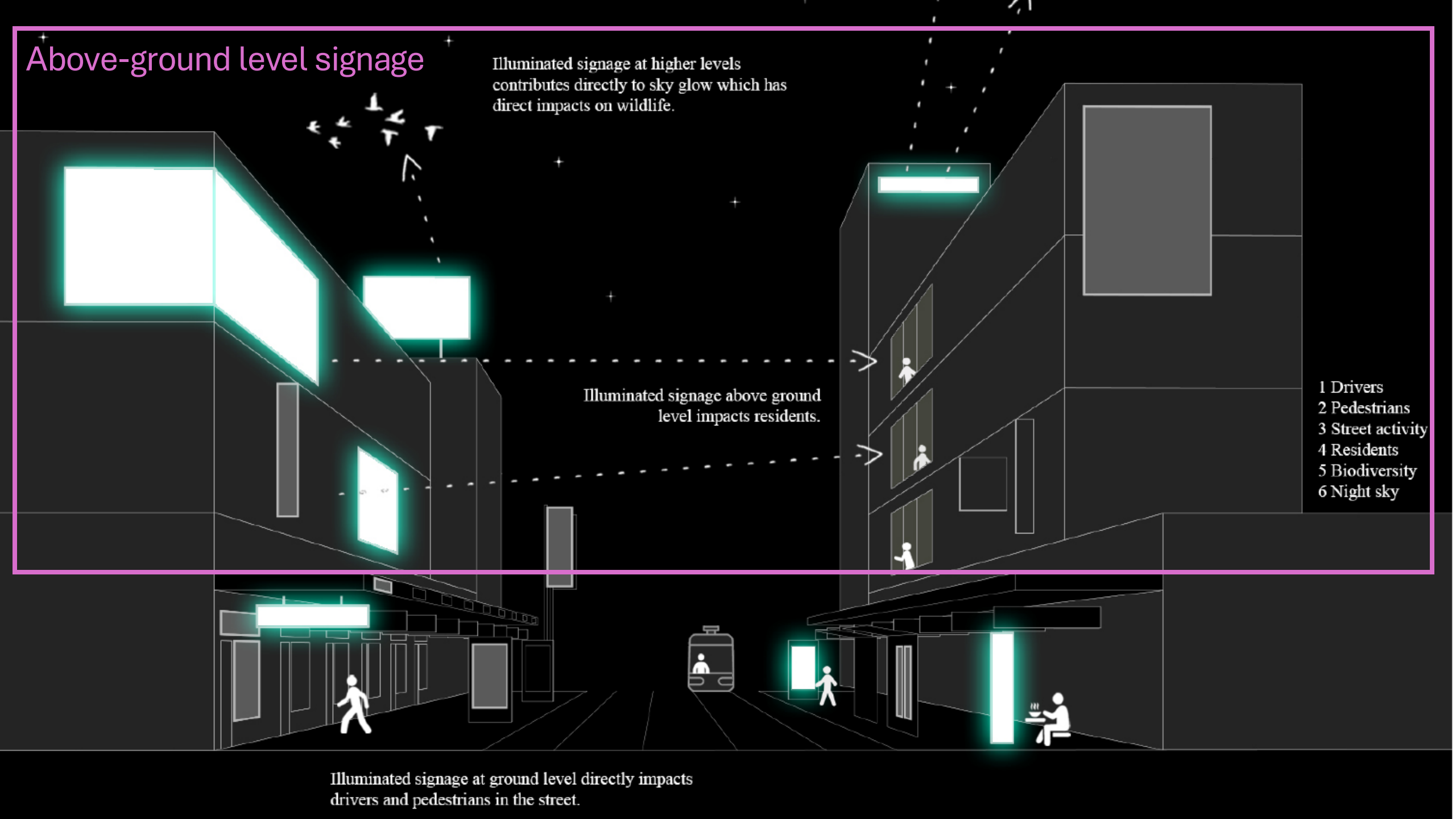


Figure 15. Internal ground level illuminated signage within a shopfront - location of measurement of ALAN impacts

Image credit: Jackson Stigwood

Above-ground level signage



Signage is meaningless without an audience

Pedestrian counts:

- Two locations
- 7 days of the week
- 4 times across the year
- Identified hours when pedestrian activity dropped below 200 people per hour identified

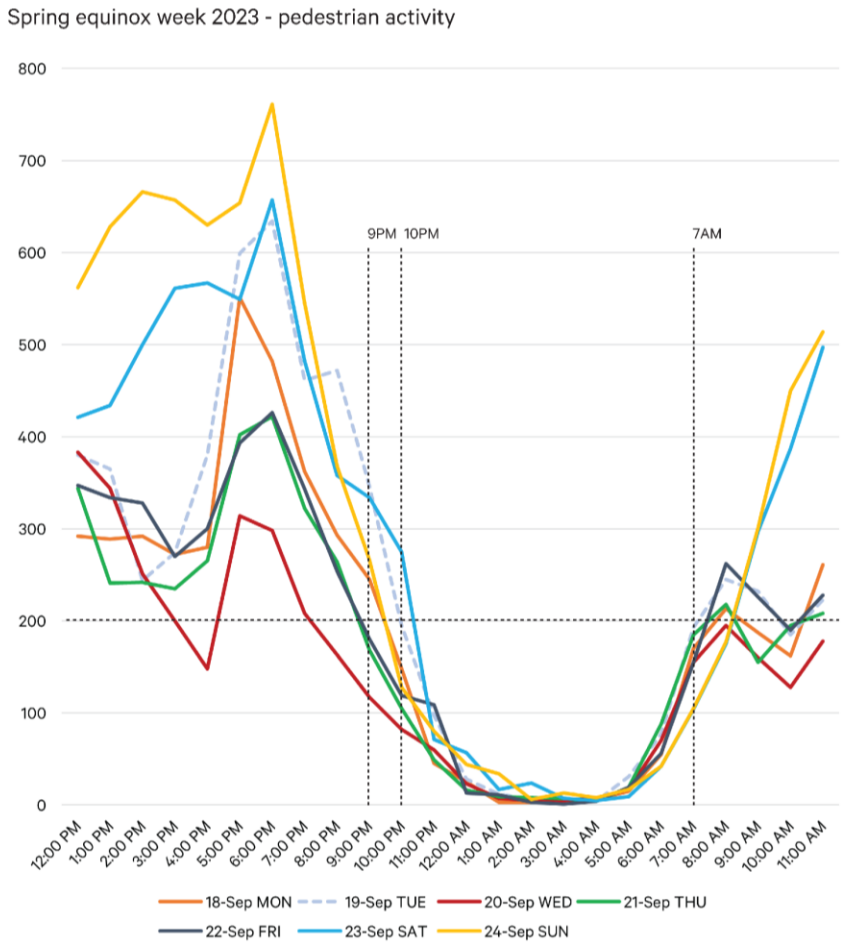


Figure 20. Pedestrian count per hour in a week over the Spring equinox in 2023 - New Quay

Signage is meaningless without an audience

PERIODS OF THE DAY WITH LESS THAN 200 PEOPLE PER HOUR

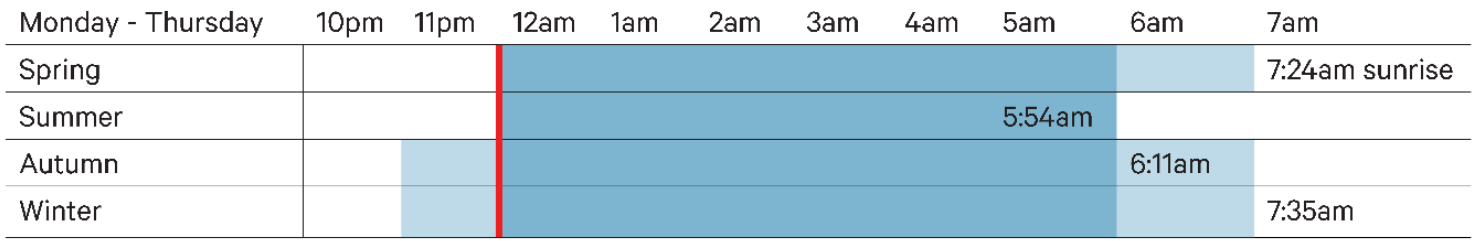


Figure 10. Times of pedestrian inactivity across Monday - Thursday (pedestrian counts fall below 200 people per hour measured in the retail core - Bourke Street North pedestrian counter data)

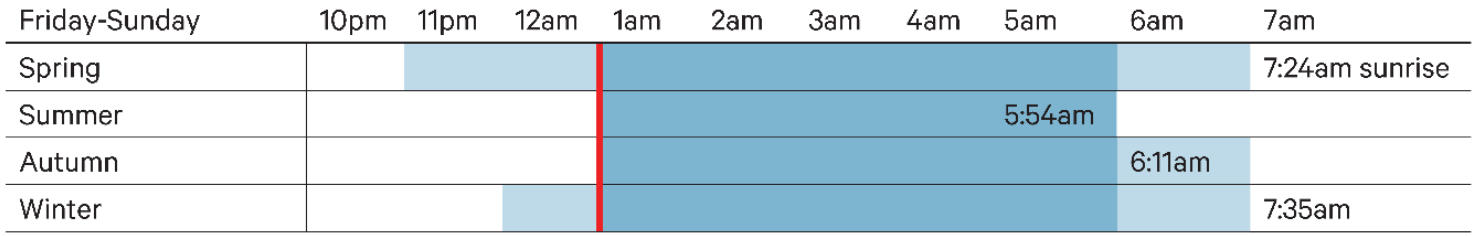


Figure 11.
Times of pedestrian inactivity across Friday - Sunday (blue times show when pedestrian counts fall below 200 people per hour measured in the retail core - Bourke Street North pedestrian counter data). Sunrise times shows at the solstice/ equinox

Pedestrian activity falls below 200 people per hour - inconsistent times across the seasons
Pedestrian activity consistently falls below 200 people per hour across the year
Alignment of when pedestrian activity falls below 200 people per hour across the year

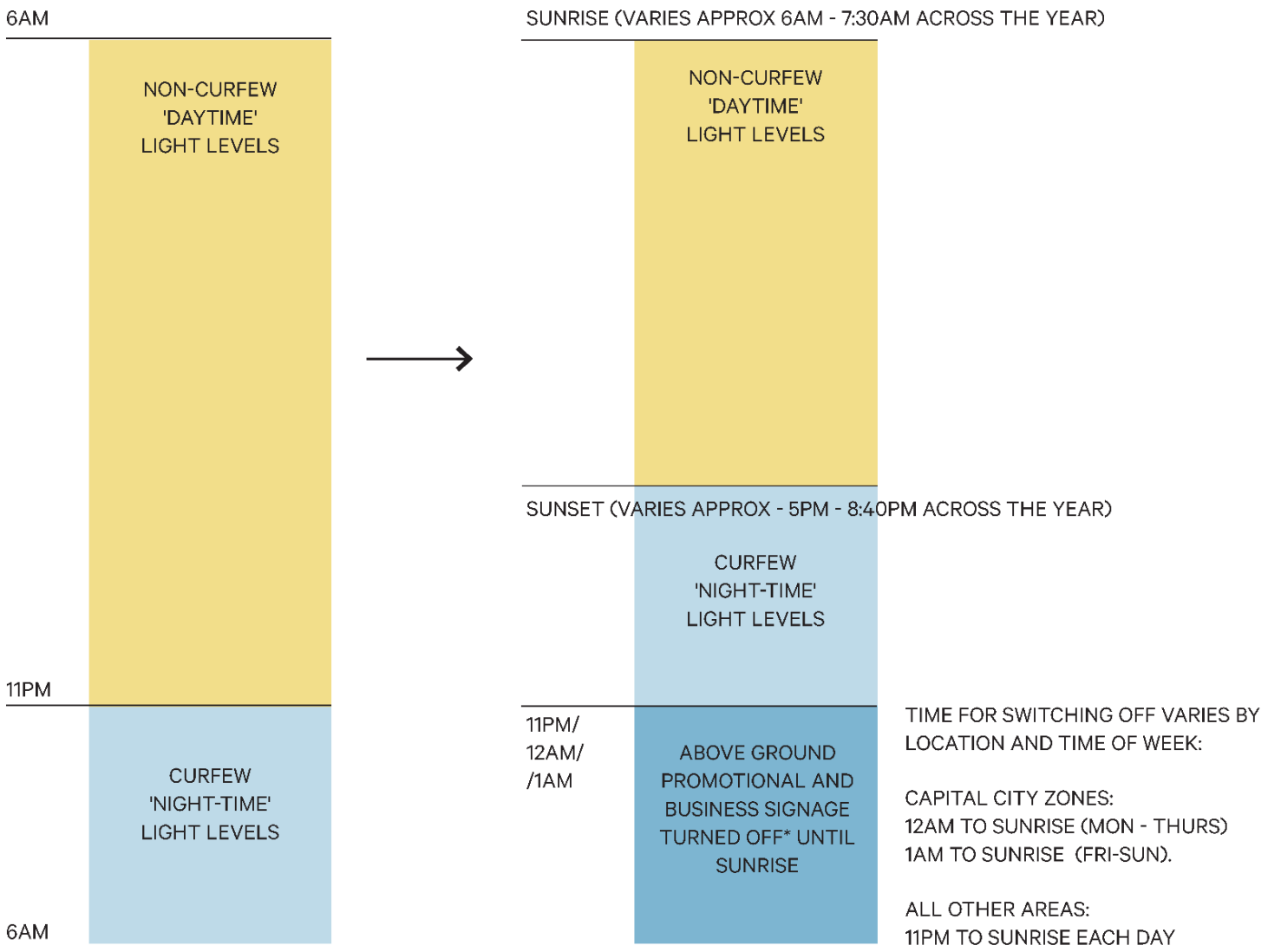
Above-ground recommendations

‘Daytime’ and ‘Night-time light levels’ adopted from Aust Standards

Daytime light levels apply sunrise – sunset

Night-time apply sunset to time for switching off time

All signage turned off overnight (Varies by location - generally 11pm – sunrise). Exceptions made for businesses still open, e.g. a hotel.



Implementing the recommendations

City of Melbourne endorsed the updated policy in 2024. To make this operational requires a change to the Melbourne Planning Scheme which could take over 2 years.

There will be multiple opportunities for public comment.

For those interested, I'd strongly encourage you to provide your technical expertise through a submission to the process.

Full report is available on City of Melbourne website: https://mvga-prod-files.s3.ap-southeast-4.amazonaws.com/public/2024-07/JUL24%20FMC2%20AGENDA%20ITEM%206.1.pdf