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Peter  
Hassall

# Light exploded in Capital's sky

By LINLEY BONIFACE

A piece of space junk, possibly a military satellite or a rocket booster, may have exploded over Wellington on Sunday night.

The large, fast-moving object was spotted and reported to the Carter Observatory by three people in Wellington and two in Nelson.

Mr Frank Andrews, a Carter Observatory astronomer, said he had no doubt the sightings were genuine.

The object could have been one of two things: a bright fireball (meteorite) or a piece of re-entering space junk, he said.

He suspect it was more likely to be space junk — probably a discarded rocket booster or a low-orbit space satellite.

The object appeared to have

been heading roughly northwest.

The wreckage was now likely to be in the Tasman Sea, although it was possible some scorched debris could be found on land.

Mrs Avryll Bellamy, of Khandallah, was one of the Wellingtonians who saw the object on Sunday.

She was watching television in the lounge of her home when she felt a bright light on her face.

The curtains were open, and she looked up and saw "an enormous light" shining through the window.

The other two sightings were in Nelson and Taita.

Mr Andrews said other people probably saw the object too but thought it was a shooting star.