



# Sutherland Shire Environment Centre

Suite 7 Durban Court, Old Princes Hwy, Sutherland NSW 2232  
PO Box 589 Sutherland NSW 1499 | 02 9545 3077 | office@ssec.org.au  
www.ssec.org.au | ABN: 96 127 431 611

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Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committees  
on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

## **Inquiry into the Telecommunications Amendment (Mobile Phone Towers) Bill 2011**

Dear Secretary

Sutherland Shire Environment Centre supports the amendment of existing telecommunications legislation and congratulates Mr Wilkie for introducing the proposed bill.

From calls we receive, our Centre is aware of considerable public dissatisfaction with current legislation. The community has few rights and the telecommunications carriers can effectively do as they please, with little effective regulation from the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

Our Centre is particularly concerned about the long-term health effects of the radiation from telecommunications facilities. Although this radiation complies with the current ARPANSA standard, it does not protect the community from long-term, non-heating effects of radiation. This radiation has been categorised a possible carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and there are studies showing increased cancer rates among populations living near telecommunications transmitters for long periods of time.

The Sutherland Shire Environment Centre calls on the Inquiry to support the following amendments to the legislation:

1. All telecommunications towers should be exempt from the Low Impact Facilities Determination and subject to local government approval. However, local governments have different processes for notifying the public about proposed developments. To ensure consistency of notification, the legislation should require carriers to follow the notification process in the new Communications Alliance

Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code for all new facilities, irrespective of whether there are existing facilities on site.

2. The legislation should also apply, as required by the amendment, to agents of carriers.
3. Activities that will increase radiation levels must not be classified as 'maintenance' activities.
4. A Ministerial Code of Practice should apply to carriers and their agents. For consistency, it should also apply to companies which install other radiating infrastructure, such as smart meters or base stations for the rail system. The Communications Alliance Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code should be adopted for this Code of Practice.
5. The proposal that base stations cannot be constructed within 200m of community sensitive sites is not practical. Instead, carriers should be required to minimise exposures at community sensitive sites and demonstrate how they have done this. (This requirement currently exists in the Communications Alliance Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code.)
6. The ACMA should be required to provide maps of the locations of telecommunications facilities as well as other radiating infrastructure.
7. The ACMA is not an appropriate body to hear complaints about the Ministerial Code of Practice. It has not dealt effectively with community complaints about breaches of the Australian Communications Industry Alliance 'Code for the Deployment of Mobile Phone Network Infrastructure'. Instead, a new body should be created for this purpose.

We look forward to hearing the outcome of the Inquiry.

Yours faithfully

Jenni Gormley  
Chair