

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

Submission to the Telecommunications Amendments (Mobile Phone Towers) Bill 2011

We are at present fighting Optus who are proposing to install a tower on a small water storage tank adjacent to a number of residences in Craignish – Hervey Bay QLD.

We have had problems in the following areas which need addressing

- 1:- No independent body is available to determine whether a facility is Low Impact or not.
- 2:- Lack of consideration for the Precautionary Principle
 Detrimental effects on health and stress on families
- 3:- Consultation process a complete sham.
- 4:- Outdated standards for safe Electromagnetic standards.

Optus claims this is a low impact facility and thus is exempt from any town planning regulations or constraints. It is however higher than the heights set out in the legislation. It is in a residential zone. The antenna is less than 30m from the bedroom of the adjacent house and less than 60m from 6 adjacent houses. They have planned to site the pole for the antenna on the base of the tank bracing it to an equipment bunker rather than the tank providing any support. The whole installation is artificially set up to circumvent the intention of the legislation as well as the letter of the law.

1 :- There does not appear to be any independent body that will examine these cases and determine whether they comply with the legislation or not. The local council said that the telecommunications carrier makes the determination which they are unable (or unwilling) to challenge. The state government planning body indicated that it was a federal matter. The TIO would only take submissions from the owner of the land on which the tower is sited (not the immediate residents). The federal minister – Senator Conroy, indicated neither he nor his department were able (or willing) to make a determination. Following legal advice it became obvious that our only avenue was to take the case to the Federal Court. You will readily understand that this process, especially with the appeals that the telcos always undertake is well beyond the resources of average Australians, even a group of willing contributors.

We need an independent government body that will review contentious installations and make a determination as to their high or low impact status. A better situation would be to remove the “Low impact” designation so that all installations require town planning approval.

2 :- This whole episode has been going on now for 12 months. It has impacted significantly on our family, especially my wife who underwent major brain surgery just prior to the initial announcement. The major stress and anxiety associated with the 24hour a day constant radiation exposure posed by this tower has significantly impacted on her recovery. We are now planning to move from our family home if this proceeds. This will produce further disruption to her health. This could be avoided if Optus had adhered to the precautionary principal. They only consider their profits, not the health of the residents, unless forced to by adequate legislation, not the wishy-washy current legislation. It needs to be more than guidelines.

3 :- The “Consultation” process is a complete farce. In our case this consisted of a community meeting at which the representative of Optus basically stood up and told us that we had no power to stop the tower, due to the legislation. He also said we had no worries about the radiation dose as it was only a fraction of the allowable dose as determined by ARPANZA.

Our local federal member simply supported Optus with his simple platitudes. He continues to be a staunch supporter of the telcos in all his parliamentary speeches on the subject. Foreign company profits appear to be more important to him than the welfare of his constituents.

Following amendments to their proposed plan a further consultation process consisted of a letter drop only.

4 :- As this is an evolving field, it takes considerable time for experimental results to be translated to provable effects. I suggest a review of the history of Ionizing radiation, Asbestos, and Cigarette smoke should not be ignored. The Electromagnetic standards of ARPANZA need to be reviewed frequently. Biological effects other than heating need to be considered. In the interim we should legislate for a separation of the radiation source from people until its safety can be assured. This may reduce their profits minimally. Our

government should be more concerned with its citizens' safety rather than foreign company profits.

I therefore plead with you to support the amendments to this current legislation so that the average Australian citizen can have a fair go when confronted by these giant telecommunications companies.

I Remain,

Yours Faithfully,

Robert B.W. Taylor