

Subject: Submission to the House Committee Inquiry into the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Community Consultation) Bill
Date: Friday, 11 November 2011 3:33:15 PM

To the Committee Chair, Ms Sharon Bird and Committee Members

Re: House Committee to inquire into the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Community Consultation) Bill

Although I have never spoken to or met Ms Michelle Pini, I fully support her submission to this committee (Submission No. 1 online).

I wrote the following letter to the editor of the Milton Ulladulla Times newspaper (published 14th September 2011):

"I strongly oppose the erection of a 50m tower in Forster Drive, Bawley Point because of its proximity to houses. The fact that adjoining property owners weren't formally contacted and there was no community consultation from Shoalhaven Council because this DA it's a "complying development" proves that current State and/or Federal laws need to be changed immediately.

Who would approve such a law - giving no rights to people affected by a tower and allowing their properties to be devalued with no right of appeal? Why don't telecommunications operators hold a public meeting and be open and transparent, instead of sneakily erecting a huge tower next to families who moved to the country to escape 'progress'."

Community consultation should be the first stage of any proposed telecommunications tower (or major construction works), as this will allow input from all interested stakeholders. Notification of the scheduled meeting for community consultation should be at least 6 weeks in advance, with weekly advertising in local papers up to the date of the meeting to ensure all stakeholders are notified. Owners of properties in the locality should be notified of the proposed meeting in writing. This simple process will allow the community to be engaged in the proposal and a suitable site can then be selected - without the current angst of the public.

The fact that the adjoining property owners weren't notified of the proposed tower at Bawley Point (on the south coast of NSW) is appalling and democratic process was absent. I cannot believe a tower can be erected next door to a family without their knowledge, with the telecommunications company complying with the law, in this day & age. No-one would agree that this is proper process. Obviously the current law gives no rights to existing landholders affected by a tower, favouring instead the companies who will gain from the current quiet and quick deceitful process. I wonder who allowed the current process to exist, as it goes against Australian values of fairness.

Please provide proof, without doubt, that people living in the vicinity of a telecommunications tower will not have their health compromised? The health of the adjoining property owners has suffered already. Why should they have to fight erection of this tower, when they should have been allowed their say *before* the complying development approval was given. The 'fight' has been costly (affecting them enormously) and should be unnecessary.

In the case of the proposed Bawley Point tower, the families affected live in the country to escape 'city progress' and all that goes with city living. They have tank water, septic tanks and happily live on more than an acre of land. They don't want to view a telecommunications tower when they walk outside. There are plenty of hills in the area with no houses, so why pick Forster Drive? No doubt Crown Castle have their reasons, but none would override the reasons why there shouldn't be a tower on this site.

Crown Castle state in their submission that they have less than 1% of people complaining. If the community were consulted, this could become zero. No doubt complaints are from rural communities, as people living in rural areas enjoy a natural outlook from their properties - without a metal tower emitting radiation and jeopardising their health.

I also challenge Points 3, 4 and 5 in Crown Castle's submission, which clearly shows that they are not interested in listening to people's concerns about the location of a tower, just commercial interests and their concern about a perceived "unrealistic burden". Their attitude is sad, as is their lack of compassion for the people they place a "burden" on.

Please allow this Bill to proceed and give Australians a right to be consulted, a right to object, and if necessary, a right to delay the project until a property can be sold - if property owners are defeated and they choose to live elsewhere.

Thank you for allowing me the right to submit this submission and thank you for your time in giving due process for necessary changes.

Mrs. G. Staniford