

Submission to the House Committee for the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Community Consultation) Bill 2011

I would like to express my support for Mr Wilkie's Telecommunications Bill.

In December of 2010' Telstra wanted to build a high impact tower near our residence in a rural area. We knew nothing about the proposed tower until Aurecon put the sign on the fence with less than a fortnight to consider all the issues and no one to consult with for advice.

After a tremendous time of stress and consultation regarding issues, Telstra staff met with us. They had been planning this tower for over 2 years with NO CONSULTATION with us. The neighbors pulled out of the agreement so they had to find another site.

An employee who was a sub-contractor to Aurecon rang us in February, and he was quite bullying and intimidating in his conversation.

The accumulation of stress from the previous December had impacted our lives and now we had added stress with a very, serious personal health issue.

In October 2011, Aurecon rang and then sent plans for a new site. The paperwork we received for our consultation was incorrect. They then had to send another letter with new plans. It gave EME readings for a tower with one panel which was incorrect. The letter also says we will get another 9 panels in the future, 12 all together. This is a big tower.

We have had to juggle trying to consult with Telstra about the tower and find out information about complicated things we have no knowledge about with managing family pressures and significant health issues. Instead of talking to the community first, Telstra just made up its own mind about what it wanted with no consultation with us until the last minute.

Because of our concerns about the new plans, we requested more consultation with Telstra staff, knowing there was little time for a response. With daily visits to Toowoomba for cancer treatment every day for 8 weeks, and so close again to Christmas, it is extremely stressful.

We don't even mind a tower being put up, but would have preferred a location away on another hill where few people live. We are grateful that Telstra seem to have decided to listen to us but there are some issues unresolved. I hope they keep their word.

We don't know yet if other carriers will add to our tower. We hope it won't get any bigger but that's pretty unlikely. I hear they can put new panels on without telling us or having to get Council to approve it. After fighting so hard for a better spot for the tower it would be a dreadful thing to happen.

This has been stressful and made it hard to cope. Our family routine has been pushed about and made very difficult with all this added stress. I really wish there had been somewhere we could have gone for help but there doesn't seem to be anywhere.

I think consultation should mean that Telstra and the others have to listen to what we have to say and take some notice. If a tower is going up in your community you should have equal rights.

I hope you will all give Mr Wilkie's bill your vote and make sure other communities don't go through the same incredible stress that we have had to experience.

Yours faithfully

Donald and Barbara McKay