

C I T Y O F W A N N E R O O

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF ELECTORS
HELD AT THE WARWICK COMMUNITY HALL, DORCHESTER AVENUE, WARWICK
ON FRIDAY, 24 MAY 1996

ATTENDANCES AND APOLOGIES

Councillors:	A V DAMMERS, JP - Mayor, Chairman	Central Ward
	F D FREAME - Deputy Mayor	South West Ward
	P O HEALY	North Ward
	S P MAGYAR	Central Ward
	A W WIGHT	South Ward
	A G TAYLOR	South Ward
	W D DUFFY	South Ward
	T W POPHAM	South Ward
	V G HANCOCK	South-West Ward

Town Clerk:	R F COFFEY
Deputy City Planner:	J HUMPHREYS
Minute Clerk:	S BRUYN

In Attendance

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes, MLA - Member for Kingsley
Mr Richard Evans, MLA - Member for Cowan
Ms Gay Brooker - Ratepayers' representative
Mr Rory O'Brien - O'Brien Planning Consultants

An apology for absence was tendered by Cr Wood.

Apologies for absence were tendered by:

Mrs J King, 19 Greenhill Ct, Kallaroo
Mr J O'Donahue, Chelsford Road

The following apologies were tendered by residents of the Churches
of Christ Homes Inc, Warwick Village:

Ms Maisie Lourensz
R Blackman
Ms June Forrest
M Innes
A Innes
R Roberts
J A Ryalls
P Gillett
Mr Bruce Cameron
H Sharp
T Owenelly
G Richards
B Mettam

There were 115 Electors and 1 member of the Press in attendances.

The Chairman declared the meeting open at 1936 hrs.

This meeting had been called in accordance with the provisions of Section 171(4) of the Local Government Act, in response to a petition of Electors.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed location of a telecommunications tower at the Warwick Police Station site, Ellersdale Road, Warwick.

The Mayor introduced Councillors and members of staff and invited the Deputy City Planner to address the meeting.

The Deputy City Planner, Mr Humphreys, advised of Council's position in relation to the application from Vodafone to erect a telecommunications tower on the Police Station site.

He stated that Council advertised the proposal on site for 30 days to gauge residents reaction and reported on a petition and letters of objections received opposing the erection of the tower.

The Deputy City Planner stated that in light of those submissions a report was presented to the Town Planning Committee with a recommendation that the proposal be approved, subject to certain conditions.

He commented that after receiving a deputation from a representative of the Australian Radiation Laboratory who explained the technical side of radiation associated with these facilities, the Town Planning Committee felt that as it was such an important issue they deferred the matter to the Full Council meeting so that they would be aware of the outcome of this electors meeting.

Mr Rory O'Brien then gave a slide presentation in relation to the proposed Vodafone Telecommunications Tower, showing present and proposed transceiver stations in the northern part of the metropolitan area and details of the proposed site and tower at Warwick, including safety aspects of the site.

He explained that the reason for the proposed tower is to provide better coverage for mobile phone users in the Warwick area and outlined the reasons for selecting the site in Warwick.

In relation to safety aspects of the proposed tower, Mr O'Brien commented that electromagnetic emissions from mobile digital phones and mobile digital base stations are lower than those emanating from many common household appliances and explained the Australian standard for electromagnetic radiation emissions.

Mr O'Brien discussed radio and television emissions, which he believed were 500 times higher than those from mobile phone base stations, and felt that there was no evidence to suggest that there were any harmful health effects from any of these.

He commented that in relation to concern regarding hearing aids, the modern hearing aids had a shield around them and there were no problems with these.

Mr O'Brien advised of a recent visit organised by Vodafone of a representative from the Australian Radiation Laboratory and stated that a report from the representative concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that mobile phone stations are a health hazard.

Ms Gay Brooker, the ratepayers' representative, then addressed the meeting and advised of her concern for the health of the children and reported on research she had undertaken in regard to the proposed tower.

In reply to comments made by Mr O'Brien in relation to an existing radio tower in Hamersley, she commented that this had been in existence for 30 years and the City of Stirling had advised that the whole area around the radio tower was to be made public bushland.

She stated that even though we live with electromagnetic radiation, we have a choice to either switch it off or, in relation to UV rays, to keep out of the sun, but we do not have this choice with a telecommunication tower.

Ms Brooker commented on a suggestion made at the first public meeting to have the Warwick Open Space as an alternative site and advised that the Friends of Warwick Open Space have indicated that they are happy to have bushland cleared to accommodate this tower in preference to a potential risk to the health of our children.

She referred to the recent visit by Mr Graeme Elliott from the Australian Radiation Laboratory to attend a deputation at the Town Planning meeting held on 20 May 1996, and commented on discussions she had with Mr Elliott after the meeting where he conceded that to prove conclusively that there is a health hazard may take another 5 to 10 years, and in the meantime some children may develop leukaemia.

Ms Brooker explained the radiation used in telecommunication towers and other areas and the effects of thermal and non thermal radiation and commented that scientific opinion is divided on thermal and A-thermal effects.

She quoted from a comment made by Dr Ross Adie, an Australian scientist, in relation to A-thermal radiation which stated that more account should be taken of A-thermal radiation and also quoted from other comments made by doctors who believed there were adverse affects from radio transmissions.

Ms Brooker commented on the Australian Standard for radiation and referred to various doctors who agreed in principle that the Australian Standard should be raised to the level of the international standard and quoted from an article which referred to evidence linking exposure to electromagnetic fields with increased health risks.

She reported on the findings of a Dr Hocking in relation to the correlation between childhood leukaemia and radio towers and commented on other health risks felt to be associated with radio towers.

Ms Brooker referred to different findings by scientists in relation to the safety risks of radio towers and commented on the principle of prudent avoidance where it is suggested that where there is any shadow of a doubt, this principle should be adhered to.

She referred to the lack of security at radio sites and felt that the public should be warned of the dangers of these sites.

In conclusion Ms Brooker believed that the Federal Government should be lobbied to ensure that the Telecommunications Act is amended to protect the children of Australia before a major catastrophe occurs.

Mrs Cheryl Edwardes, MLA, Member for Kingsley, then addressed the Committee and felt that as there was an abundance of conflicting scientific evidence as to the possible effects that these cell towers will have, that any community should be taking a responsible and precautionary approach to the siting of these towers within residential areas.

She believed that more research was needed in relation to the possible health risks of radio towers and pointed out that not one carrier will sign any communication saying they guarantee that there will be no problems in the future.

Mrs Edwardes requested the City of Wanneroo to oppose the location of this proposed tower on the Warwick Police Station site and to take a precautionary approach to all future applications in the siting of towers.

She felt that the proposers of the tower and the Federal Minister for Communications should be advised of both the City of Wanneroo's opposition and the opposition by the ratepayers and that the Federal Minister for Communications should put in place a precautionary policy direction that in Australia, cell towers should only be built in residential areas where there is a buffer of 300 - 500 metres and that further research be carried out urgently and immediately.

The Mayor then asked Mrs Edwards what the State Government was doing towards this problem and advised he would like to see some support from the State Government.

Mrs Edwardes advised that she was at the meeting as the Member for Kingsley and would raise her concerns with the State Government and commented on the visual pollution and health risks associated with these towers.

She advised that the Federal Telecommunications Act would override anything that the State or local councils could put in place and believed that the Federal Minister for Communications must immediately put in place policy guidelines, as adopted elsewhere in the world to ensure that there is a buffer zone, as a precautionary approach.

Mrs Edwardes then commented on the successful moving of mobile phone towers by various Councils and stated that she believed this could be achieved.

The Mayor agreed this could be done but believed that the local authority should have the final say.

The Mayor then invited members of the public to make comment.

Mr Ray Weir, a resident of Warwick, reported that his house was only 200 metres from the proposed site and was concerned that the proposed site might have been suggested by Council.

He stated that he was also a regular mobile phone user and was aware of the health risks involved but questioned the siting of the proposed tower as the Telecommunications Act says that the towers should be located as far away as possible from residential properties, schools etc. and there was an area in the Warwick Open Space which was further away from residential properties than the proposed site.

The Mayor advised that Mr O'Brien had stated earlier in the meeting one of the reasons for not accepting the Warwick Open Space site was because it was a System 6 Reserve.

Mr O'Brien then stated that the City of Wanneroo did not direct Vodafone to the Warwick Police Station site and that it was a site that was selected because of the existing tower in that position.

The Mayor then explained how applications are dealt with by the City of Wanneroo and advised that the applicants choose their own location.

Mr Weir then quoted from a letter he had received from Hassells, the consultants, dated 9 April 1996, which stated that Vodafone was directed to the site by the Council.

Mr O'Brien stated that they had not been directed to this site by the City of Wanneroo but knew that some other Councils did and believed that Hassells in Sydney confused this case with a recent case in the City of Armadale where the Council there did direct them to another site.

Mr Weir then requested Mrs Edwardes to direct this matter to the State Government to allow the tower to be accommodated there and raised his concerns with the number of commercial developments taking place in the nearby area.

Mrs Edwardes advised that if the City of Wanneroo directed their letters to the Environmental Protection Authority and to the Planning Department, she would take this matter up with the respective Ministers.

The Mayor then explained to the meeting that the majority of public open space is vested in the City of Wanneroo but that the City of Wanneroo does not own this land.

Mr Edwin McHugh of 5 Dorchester Avenue, Warwick advised the meeting that he had a pacemaker and had been warned that under no account to put a mobile phone that is switched on in his pocket as it could stop his pacemaker.

Mr Karl Harrison of 19 Aberdare Way, Warwick commented on the carriers coming into the area and asked Mr O'Brien which Australian Standard he was referring to.

Mr O'Brien replied that it was AS27720.

Mr Harrison commented that he believed there were other sites available and in respect of a nearby telecommunications tower, felt that all the facilities were there to be shared and queried sharing of the cost to make the present tower suitable to their requirements and also queried Vodafone's use of the present tower.

Mr O'Brien explained the situation in relation to sharing of facilities with Telstra and Optus and commented that Telstra and Optus already have developed systems in Warwick and so would not require this tower.

In relation to Vodafone using the present tower, Mr O'Brien stated that it did not mesh in with the Vodafone network.

Ms Anne Cutler of Padbury, referred to the health effects of the tower and queried whether there was a multiple effect if you have three transmitters all operating from the one tower and if so should the buffer zone be enlarged.

Mr O'Brien advised that not a lot was known about this effect and so could not reply to the question.

Mr John Armenti of 36 Chelsford Road referred to technological questions raised at the last public meeting and queried why there was no-one present at this meeting to supply this information.

He commented that Warwick was a small suburb but had a large shopping centre, police station and now two communications towers and queried the siting of these towers in Warwick.

Mr John Hegarty of 24 Chelsford Road, Warwick stated that he did not wish the tower built in the open space either and raised his concerns in relation to towers being 1 kilometre in distance apart, querying if with new technology there were other ways of achieving this.

Mr O'Brien advised that the 1 kilometre grid was the worst scenario and commented that for the next five years a separation of 5 to 8 kilometres between these mobile stations would be adequate.

Michelle Saleeba of Marangaroo queried why the towers could not be placed underground and believed that there should be technology available to place these towers underground.

The Mayor advised that the towers were unable to be placed underground due to the fact that the microwaves would not travel underground.

Mr George Novak, Assistant Secretary of the Communications Electrical Plumbing Union reported on different aspects of electromagnetic radiation, including long term health effects and believed that the residents should direct their concerns to the Federal Government.

He commented on new mobile phone technology available in relation to the mobile handset and stated that this had not been applied by Vodafone, Telstra or Optus.

Jenny Edwards of Ackworth Crescent reported on communication sent to Senator Alston in relation to opposition to the proposed tower and advised of changes that will occur as from the 1st of July 1996.

She commented that Optus, Vodafone and Telstra will have to work more closely together and will also be required to work with the communities where they wish to erect their towers and hoped that the City of Wanneroo would not allow the tower to be erected before the proposed changes come into force in July.

Mr Richard Dobrowolski of Greenwood called on the Federal member to speak on behalf of his colleagues.

Mr Richard Evans, Federal Member for Cowan, commented on the commercial viability of Vodafone erecting a tower in Warwick and believed that this matter should be directed to the Council.

He commented on discussions he had with Senator Alston in relation to this matter and believed it was an issue he could raise in the party room on Tuesday as a general business item as he felt it was an issue that a lot of people were concerned about.

Mr Evans advised that he would speak to the appropriate Minister and deliver the resolutions passed at this meeting to him.

In relation to the Telecommunications Act, he commented on the buffer zone required and believed that Vodafone were trying to address the concerns raised by attending these public meetings.

Mr Gary Jaeschke of 19 Benton Way Warwick, queried the radius covered in transmissions by other towers and requested to know what the gap was in the Warwick area.

Mr O'Brien replied that he did not know where all of the other carriers' towers were and so could not answer this question but commented that Vodafone could not use the present tower as it was too far out of the network to work properly.

Mr Jeff McAskill of Alexander Heights referred to a proposed tower in High View Park, Alexander Heights and commented that he had been advised by the Council that it was a federal matter and Mr Evans' office had told him that it was up to the Council to make a decision on it.

The Mayor advised that Council was required to advertise and seek comments on an application and then make a recommendation but that the final decision did not lie with the City of Wanneroo, it rested with the Federal Government.

Mr McAskill stated that in relation to the proposed tower at Alexander Heights, the proposal put forward by Telstra doesn't show that its right on the boundary of a proposed school, within 150 metres of houses and near another State school.

MOVED Ms Gay Brooker, SECONDED Mr John Armenti that:

- 1 the City of Wanneroo opposes the erection of this proposed tower on the Warwick Police Station site and takes a precautionary approach to all future applications in the siting of these towers;
- 2 the City of Wanneroo advises the proposers of the tower and the Federal Minister for Communications of both its opposition and the opposition of the ratepayers;
- 3 this meeting call on the Federal Minister for Communications to put in place immediately a precautionary policy direction that in Australia, cell towers should only be built in residential areas where there is a buffer of 300 - 500 metres and that further research be carried out.

FOR THE MOTION: 115
AGAINST THE MOTION: 0

The Mayor declared the Motion

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed at 2107 hrs.