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22 October 2020

Rachel Blackwood
Assistant Secretary
Spectrum & Telecommunications Deployment Policy Branch
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication

Email: powersandimmunities@communications.gov.au

Dear Ms Blackwood

Adelaide Hills Council Submission on improving the telecommunications powers and immunities framework

Adelaide Hills Council is grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals put forward regarding proposals to improve the telecommunications powers and immunities framework.

In preparing this submission, a review of the proposed changes was undertaken including consultation with Council Members and relevant staff.

By way of context to our response, note that the Adelaide Hills Council located on the periphery of Metropolitan Adelaide and is a predominantly rural and primary production area located within renowned undulating and scenic landscapes. It is home to just under 40,000 people who live in leafy characterful suburbs and small towns dotted throughout our district which has an area of 795km². Our Council area is a significant tourist destination for local, national and international visitors who visit our 21 wineries, over 40 cellar doors (representing over 90 wine labels), wildlife parks, national motor museum and other tourist sites. Protecting the scenic amenity and character of our residential suburbs, towns and scenic rural landscapes is therefore of paramount importance to Council. Hence any proposals with regard to allowing revised forms of telecommunications facilities to be captured by the Low Impact Facilities Determination (LIFD) should not result in any negative impacts on the character and amenity of our suburbs and scenic landscapes. We appreciate that the intent of the proposed changes is to allow for the efficient roll out of new telecommunications infrastructure. However, as stated in the consultation documents, a balance needs to be achieved between the objectives of the proposed changes for the telecommunication providers and the ability for councils to influence the outcomes with regard to the design and location of such facilities. Council is therefore strongly opposed to the installation of any LIFD facilities which will have a negative impact on our renowned landscapes, suburbs and towns.

The Adelaide Hills Council has developed a position on the current low impact telecommunication facilities which is outlined in a Council Policy entitled 'Telecommunications Installation Small

Cell Stobie Pole Mounted Antennae' (click [here](#) to view a copy) which was adopted by Council in August 2019. Given the likely roll out of additional facilities of this nature in the Adelaide Hills Council area, the policy was developed to articulate Council's precautionary position on this issue and to enable it to advocate for suggested ways to reduce the visual impacts of such small cell antennae on the surrounding locality.

With the above policy and earlier comments in mind, Council's response to the proposed changes to the telecommunications powers and immunities framework focuses solely on Section 3 – *Facilitating services in line with community expectations and to support economic growth*. Our comments on the proposals on this Section are as follows:

A. Improve coverage outcomes through better infrastructure, where safe

Allow antenna protrusions to be extended to a height of 5 meters

Council has no objection in principle to the proposal to extend the maximum protrusion height of antennae on existing approved towers by 2 metres (i.e. from 3 metres to 5 metres in total), as long as these do not extend beyond the approved height of existing telecommunication towers. Any extensions above the approved height will require a development application to be lodged with Council for consideration before such new antennae can be installed. It is also assumed that the 2 metre extension only captures a vertical protrusion. If it captures a horizontal protrusion as well then such an increase is not supported. Further, councils should still be notified regarding the installation of such LIFD antennae in order to be able to comment on any potential impacts of these on the character and amenity of the surrounding locality.

Specify radio communications lens antennae as a new low-impact facility

Due to the scale and size of these structures it would be challenging to locate them in our Council Area without them having an impact on the scenic qualities of our towns and rural areas. Council does therefore not support this proposal.

B. Improve coverage outcomes through tower extensions

Allow height extensions up to a maximum of 5 metres in commercial areas

Due to the potential negative impact that such facilities will have on the character of the commercial areas of our towns, Council does not support this proposal as it is considered that the impacts would be better managed and mitigated through the Development Assessment process.

C. Allowing deployment on poles rather than on utilities

Smart or slim pole could be classified as a low-impact facility

If this proposal would result in a consistent smart or slim pole typology which is sensitively designed to suit the character of the surrounding locality, then there seems to be some potential in allowing this proposal. However, if each telecommunications provider is likely to install their own style of pole, then this will create ad hoc outcomes that will add clutter to the existing infrastructure and which may affect the character and amenity of our area. In addition, our Council does not support the height of such poles being considered as low impact facilities where they would exceed the height of standard street light poles in pedestrian areas (i.e. 4-6 metres), particularly in residential and township settings. It is therefore considered that councils should be notified regarding the installation of such smart poles in order to be able to comment on the potential impacts of such facilities on the character and amenity of the surrounding area, and to be able to seek that these impacts be addressed before these poles are installed.

Summary

In summary, the Adelaide Hills Council considers that the proposed changes to the LIFD regarding telecommunications powers and immunities framework require amendment to address our concerns and comments as outlined above. Council's view is that any low-impact facilities that have the potential to have an impact on the visual character and amenity of surrounding localities due to their position, height and appearance must be referred to councils for comment to ensure that any potential impacts are appropriately addressed. In line with our feedback, we consider that an appropriate balance can be struck between the community's expectations and the proposed rollout of new infrastructure to improve the telecommunication network. We therefore request that changes be made to the proposals as outlined in this submission in order to achieve the aforementioned outcome.

If you have any queries regarding the above comments then please do not hesitate to contact me on

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Yours sincerely

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