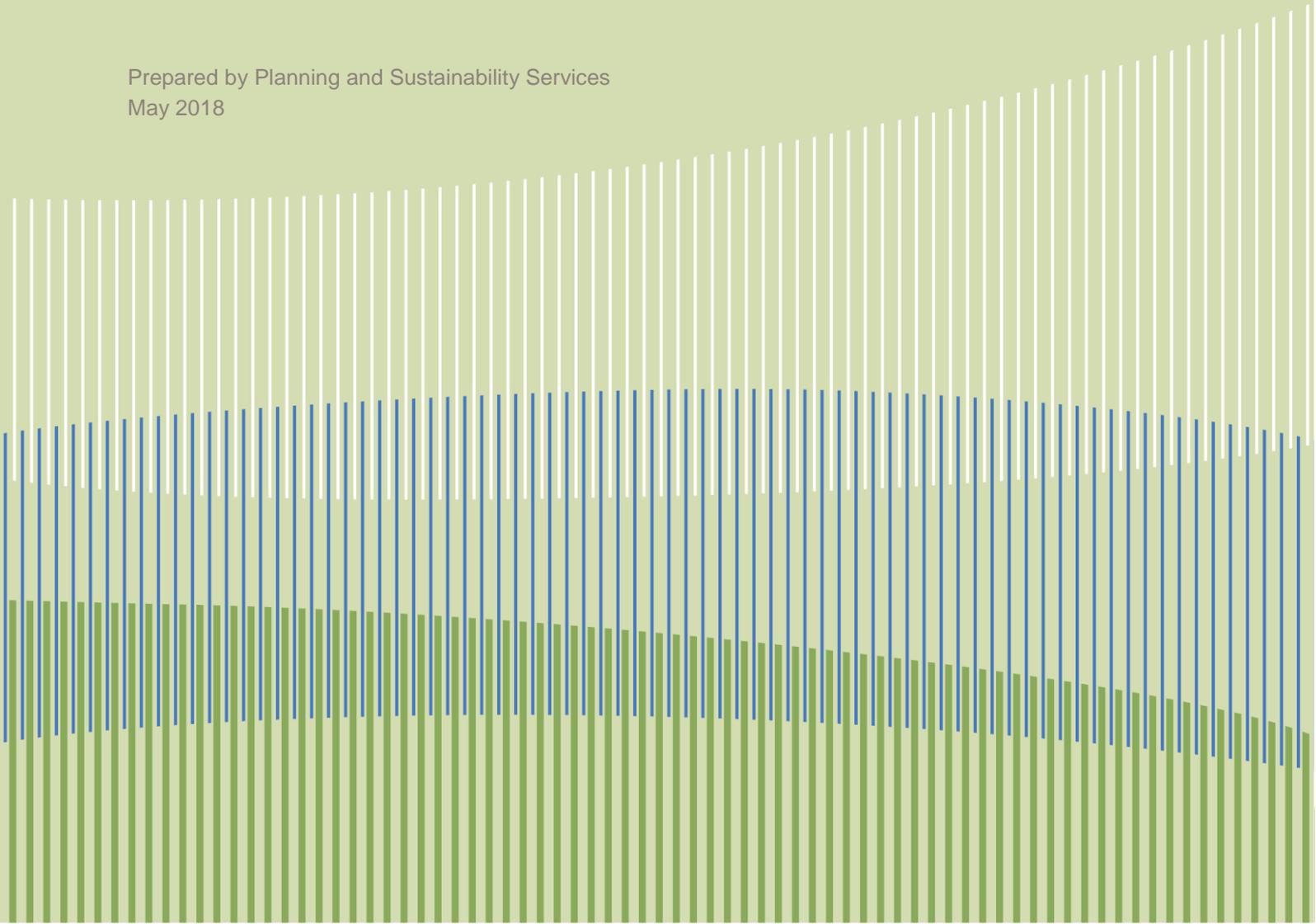


Local Planning Policy

Telecommunications Infrastructure

Prepared by Planning and Sustainability Services
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Background

Modern telecommunication systems are an essential and beneficial part of community and business life. Over 88% of Australians now own a mobile phone and with rapid advances in technology and the rollout of the National broadband network, strong growth in the transmission of digital data through mobile internet is expected.

To take advantage of modern telecommunications it is important that appropriate and adequate infrastructure is provided and that it is available to all on a cost-competitive basis.

Telecommunication infrastructure can however adversely impact the character and amenity of local environments and often raise concern of potential health issues associated with exposure to electromagnetic emissions.

This policy therefore sets out the instances where approval is required and provides objectives and requirements to guide the location, siting and design of telecommunications infrastructure where approval is required.

Definition/Application

Mobile telephone base stations are an essential component of telecommunication infrastructure and the key type of infrastructure related to this policy. A mobile telephone base station is a facility used to send and receive radio frequency or electromagnetic energy from mobile telephones to the main telephone network. Typically, a base station consists of an equipment shelter to house electronic equipment, a series of antennas and microwave transmission dishes or a cable to link base stations to the main telephone network. The antennas and microwave dishes are normally mounted on towers or buildings at a height sufficient to achieve a line-of-sight to a reasonable area.

This policy applies to all proposals for mobile telephone base stations within the Shire, other than those exempted from the requirement for planning approval by the Telecommunications Act 1997.

Development not requiring Planning Approval

The *Telecommunications Act* provides that low impact facilities described in the *Telecommunications (Low-Impact Facilities) Determination 1997* and *Amendment No 1 1999* are exempt from the need to obtain planning approval.

The Low-Impact Determination uses the zoning of land to ascertain whether a particular facility is determined as low impact. For example, a radio communications dish is defined by the Determination as low impact in a residential or commercial zone if it is not more than 1.2 metres in diameter and is colour-matched to its background or is of a colour agreed to in writing by the carrier and the relevant local government, whereas a radio communications dish in an industrial or rural area is defined as low impact if it is not more than 1.8 metres in diameter and is colour-matched to its background or is of a colour agreed to. The Determination also specifies that no facilities are low impact in an 'area of environmental significance'.

Notwithstanding this exemption, low impact facilities are still required to comply with the *Commonwealth Telecommunications Code of Practice 1997*, which requires the carrier to:

- Give notice to the owner and occupier;
- Gain agreement with affected public utilities;
- Notify road authorities and utility service providers if the carrier needs to close or divert roads or other infrastructure to install facilities; and
- Take all reasonable steps to find out whether it is able to co-locate its facility with an existing facility.

Planning Approval Requirements

Applicants will need to clearly demonstrate that their proposed base station meets the objectives and requirements of this policy. Applications must also meet any other requirement of the Shire's planning framework that may be applicable for a particular site under any relevant Town Planning Scheme, Outline Development Plan, Structure Plan, Local Planning Policy or Detailed Area Plan.

Objectives

To facilitate the development of a well planned network of mobile telephone base stations throughout the Shire to ensure that people have a choice as to who provides their telecommunications service, a wider range of services from which to choose and equitable access to the latest technologies as they become available.

To ensure that mobile telephone base stations are located and designed in a manner that minimises disturbance to the character of the local environment, the loss of amenity and meets relevant health and safety standards.

Requirements

Strategy

New structure plans, which are prepared to guide growth in the developing parts of the Shire, should take account of the strategic requirements of telecommunications carriers and, as far as is practicable, allocate particular sites for major telecommunications infrastructure, based on the provisions of this policy and include criteria to guide telecommunications developments where sites other than those identified in the structure plan are proposed with sufficient flexibility to allow for the efficient development of the network and the demands imposed by the technology.

Environmental Considerations

The telecommunication carriers should work with the Shire together to find the optimum environmental and network solution on a case-by-case basis.

Protection from visual intrusion will be the primary consideration for the Shire in determining applications for planning approval. In particular, a high priority will be given to the need to safeguard residential areas and other areas of particular importance or sensitivity to visual impact including:

- Landscape enhancement areas, scenic drives or heritage areas;
- The Murray or Serpentine River floodways;
- Areas of regionally or locally significant vegetation;
- National Parks, Conservation Parks or land reserved for Regional Open Space reservations or other similar areas of high conservation value;
- Prominent landscape features, general views in the locality and individual significant views.

Co-location of Facilities

In order to limit visual intrusion, the Shire will place considerable importance on keeping the number of telecommunications towers to the minimum consistent with the efficient operation of the network.

The sharing of sites will be strongly encouraged where that represents the optimum visual solution in a particular case having regard to the cumulative impact of additional antennas sharing a site.

Use should be made of existing buildings and other structures, such as electricity pylons, to site new antennas where this is reasonably practicable.

Design

In seeking to arrive at the best solution for an individual site, sympathetic materials, design, flush mounting, colouring and landscaping should be used. Sensitive positioning of facilities behind existing buildings or vegetation, generous setbacks to public areas and strategically located plantings to help disguise or conceal the facility should also be used.

Telecommunications carriers are encouraged to develop innovative design solutions for the structure to support facilities.

Given the greater visual impact, lattice style towers will only be supported in rural or industrial areas unless it can be demonstrated that no reasonably practicable alternative is available in a particular instance.

Health and Safety Considerations

All carriers are required to comply with the Australian Communications Authority's Radiocommunications (Electromagnetic Radiation – Human Exposure) Standard (2003). This standard incorporates substantial safety margins to address concerns for potentially sensitive groups in the community such as children, pregnant women, the infirm and aged.

Research undertaken by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) has reported that environment radiofrequency levels near base stations for the digital mobile phone network are extremely low. The ARPANSA study reported that the highest daily average level was well below one per cent of the Australian Communications Authority's public exposure limits and concluded that *"given the very low levels recorded and the relatively low power of these types of transmitters, it is unlikely that the radiofrequency radiation from base stations would cause any adverse health effects, based on current medical research"*.

In view of the currently available expert material in this field, so long as it can be demonstrated by the carrier that the operation of the facility will meet the guidelines for public exposure, the Shire does not consider it necessary in processing an application for planning to consider further the health aspects.

Administration

Directorate		Officer Title	
Planning and Sustainability		Director Planning and Sustainability	
Version	Decision to Advertise	Decision to Adopt/Amend	Current Status
1	OCM10/041 – 25/3/2010	OCM10/175 – 26/8/2010	Adopted

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