



Speech by
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MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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MOBILE PHONE TOWERS; MILPERA STATE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (7.06 p.m.): This evening I wish to touch on a couple of matters, the first of which is mobile phone towers. With competition in the telecommunications industry hotting up these days, companies want their own telecommunications towers. This means that local government is faced with myriad applications under town planning laws and ordinances from the various telecommunications companies, which are required under local government town planning laws to advertise tower proposals and enable local residents to object if they so wish. In many instances, communities do object, because they already have a number of telecommunications towers in their neighbourhood. The increasing number of telecommunications towers in suburbs is quickly becoming a major eyesore. This is occurring not only in Brisbane but in many other cities and towns throughout Queensland.

Clearly, these towers should be co-located. Some companies are endeavouring to do that, but others appear to be a little tardy. I believe it is necessary for the Minister to look at this situation with a view to giving local government more powers to ensure that, where possible, the towers used by telecommunications companies are co-located. There will always be instances where that is not possible. However, I have encountered situations where, even if there is already a tower in one neighbourhood, another company wants to put one down the road. This is a growth industry. There are more and more telecommunications companies, and with them come more mobile phone towers. Over the months and years ahead we will see an explosion in the number of telecommunications companies, which will all want their own towers. This will mean that residents will be faced with the problem of retaining the character and aesthetics of their suburbs, towns and cities. It is a growing problem. However, I believe there is a simple solution.

Greater consideration needs to be given to co-locating these towers; otherwise our cities and towns will become eyesores, with towers some 25 metres high littering the skyline. They are not like a television tower. Mobile phone towers are much taller and stand out against the skyline. I appreciate that local governments take a close, hard look at these applications and in many instances go further than that and refuse them. When that happens, the companies have the opportunity to appeal to the Planning and Environment Court. The actions with which I have been associated to date have achieved successful results for residents. However, that does not mean that this will continue in the future. Therefore, I urge the Government to toughen up the provisions in this area in relation to local government.

The second issue that I wish to touch on is that of the Milpera State High School—a magnificent high school in my electorate. It specialises in teaching students English as a second language. It is one of only a few schools in Queensland that deals specifically with this subject. We have experienced a large increase in the number of people coming from overseas who do not have English as a second language and who need to go through this school. In particular, the school deals with people in the 13 to 18 year age bracket, of which there are growing numbers.

I made reference to this issue once before in this Chamber and I am somewhat shocked to find that the Minister has not taken up my concerns in relation to this school. There is a need to replace some of the classrooms and to provide upgraded facilities, in particular a multi-purpose hall. This school is not like normal high schools in that it does not have a P & C committee. The students and their

parents, if they have parents here, attend the school for only a few months. This means that there is no ongoing commitment to the school through a P & C. There is no parents and citizens committee at all to support the school. I have raised this matter before in correspondence with the Minister. I again urge the Minister to give further consideration to providing assistance for the school in relation to building a multi-purpose hall for these people from a range of ethnic origins. From memory, the school attracts students from 54 countries. Students with origins right across the international community attend this school. This is a one-off situation; it is not to be found elsewhere in Brisbane or Queensland. Other high schools have the ongoing support of P & Cs. The Milpera State High School does not have that support. I urge the Minister for Education to give this school greater support. The Federal Government provides much more support than does the State Government.
