



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**GRIEVANCE DEBATE**

**Mobile Phone Towers**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 3 March 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 3 March 2014	<b>Source</b> House
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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Vasta, Ross, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr VASTA (Bonner) (16:55):** I rise today to bring to the attention of the House a great example of how one Bonner local community group has consistently rallied together to protect the local community in Wynnum and Manly. I speak of the action group No Towers Near Guardian Angels. I have stood previously in this House and spoken of the great work by this action group, and I felt compelled to highlight their work once more. They have proved time and time again that it takes only a few strong-willed and passionate people to generate an effective grassroots campaign.

The No Towers Near Guardian Angels group has been working within the community for increased transparency and accountability from telecommunications companies such as Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. For close to four years, they have worked tirelessly to ensure that the safety of the children at Guardian Angels Primary School is at the forefront of planned upgrades in the Wynnum-Manly area. It feels like groundhog day! When I first broached this topic in 2012 in the House, I brought to its attention the proposed Optus tower to be installed on the exact same site next to the Guardian Angels Primary School. I appeared before the House with a 3,500-strong petition with signatures from the wider community, and I know it was from their team effort and their show of people power that Optus decided not to go forward with installing a tower next to the Guardian Angels Primary School.

Fast forward to the present-day: the community is again rallying against infrastructure upgrades proposed by another telecommunications giant, Telstra. The telco has an existing tower on this site and has planned development upgrades for the tower. Telstra has been in consultation with the wider community of Wynnum and Manly, and the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group. Formed four years ago, this group is made up of a committed collection parents and wider community members from all walks of life. While their expertise lies in technical, corporate, political and media fields, they have all volunteered their own time and efforts to fighting this community concern. The group has engaged the Wynnum-Manly community on this project, which is evidenced by the 1,300 local signatures that I brought here with me today. This shows, again, that the local community overwhelmingly opposes infrastructure upgrades at the site.

This is an issue being experienced Australia wide. Not only do telecommunications companies need to meet increased demand, but they also need to accommodate for growth and improve the maintenance of local mobile network services for the greater community. I understand that Telstra needs to find that balance between finding an appropriate location within the Wynnum-Manly area, as it has identified the need to improve mobile services for the community. This issue is a double-edged sword. But I know, from my own personal dealings with Telstra, that it works hard to find the balance between community feedback and demand for increased mobile coverage. It is never an easy balance to achieve and it is one that I hope Telstra continues to strive for.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group, led by Stephen Sherrard on behalf of the local bayside community, which has worked consistently in heading up this campaign to keep Telstra accountable and to ensure that the community is aware of this issue at hand. I want to acknowledge my friend and colleague the Minister for Communications, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, for his continued interest in this issue and for his continued support for this local community group. It is his advice and assistance behind the scenes that has been invaluable and has been greatly appreciated. I acknowledge that we must continue to ensure that balance is found between community interest and the need for telecommunications companies to deliver better services to the local community and businesses. I, along with Telstra and the No Towers Near Guardian Angels group, will continue to work together constructively. We will hold the best interests of the community's safety in mind, while we also make sure that the need for improved infrastructure in the electorate of Bonner is not forgotten.