

11 April 2024

Our Reference: 3501519 Carlisle

Laura Sabitzer
Town of Victoria Park
99 Shepperton Road
Victoria Park WA 6100
Via email: LSabitzer@vicpark.wa.gov.au

Dear Ms Sabitzer,

Proposed Telecommunications Facility Replacement at 134 Oats Street, Carlisle WA 6101 – Response to DA Consultation Submissions (Application ID 5.2023.466.1)

I am writing regarding the proposed replacement of an existing telecommunications facility at the above address. Council has notified Indara that one objection was received during public notification. The objector has raised a number of concerns in relation to the proposal; this letter provides a response to these concerns.

Suitability and Need for Subject Site

The objector has made a number of claims regarding the suitability of the subject site, specifically, and telecommunications facilities in urban areas more generally.

Indara considers that this proposal is appropriate. The proposal involves replacement of an existing telecommunications structure that has been operational for many years. The replacement tower is required to ensure the structural adequacy of the facility, and accommodate carrier technology upgrades that are necessary to service the Carlisle area. The proposed facility is not a new incursion of telecommunications infrastructure into the Carlisle area; rather it involves replacement of an existing, well-established land use.

The proposal also involves replacement of the lattice tower with a new monopole that is slightly shorter in height and has a much slimmer, less bulky profile. As such, the proposal will result in an improved visual outcome for the local community, compared with the existing facility.

More generally, mobile telecommunications facilities, such as the one situated at 134 Oats Street, Carlisle, are critical components of utility infrastructure, similar to sewerage, electricity, and water services. They provide much-needed connectivity and services that are fundamental to the functioning of society.

The importance of mobile connectivity is strongly supported by both Federal and State planning policy. The Federal Government has recently updated its *Telecommunications in New Developments* policy to recognise mobile connectivity. A release from the Federal Minister for Communications advises that from a policy perspective:

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“In 2024, mobile coverage is just as important as electricity and running water...”

<https://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/rowland/media-release/new-rules-essential-mobile-coverage-housing-developments>

The WA Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage advises, in *State Planning Policy 5.2 – Telecommunications Infrastructure*:

“Adequate and reliable telecommunications are essential for all aspects of contemporary community life, from supporting the State’s economy to creating and maintaining connected and cohesive social networks. Contact between emergency services and the community increasingly relies on the telecommunications networks.”

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/state-planning-policy-52-telecommunications-infrastructure>

Mobile base stations are now a common feature in urban areas, noting these areas generally have the highest demand for network services. Mobile facilities are needed not only to provide the general population with access to mobile connectivity, but also to ensure that emergency services can rely on communication channels to protect life and property. It is not always possible to provide an adequate level of service to communities without placing facilities in residential areas, or close to established development.

The objector has requested that the facility be removed. If this were to occur, it would result in a loss of Optus and Vodafone network coverage for many residents and businesses in Carlisle and surrounding suburbs. There are no alternative sites in the area that could replicate the service provided by the current facility. Replacing an existing facility with another, less visually intrusive design is the best outcome to ensure continuity of service in Carlisle.

Planning Pathway and Exemptions

The objector has expressed concern about the planning pathway required for the proposed upgrades, and Indara’s request for town planning exemptions. We note that there are specific Federal and State planning policies that allow mobile infrastructure to be built without development consent. Noting that time is of the essence in providing telecommunications connectivity, it would be irresponsible of Indara *not* to consider these exemptions.

At a Federal level, the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and *Telecommunications (Low-Impact Facilities) Determination 2018* allow certain kinds of mobile infrastructure to be installed without development consent.

Notably, if the existing tower was owned by a mobile carrier, its replacement could be done under Schedule 3 of the *Act* as a Maintenance Activity (Division 4, Section 7(3)(d)), avoiding the need for development consent. However, because Indara does not hold a carrier licence, these powers do not apply in this case.

At a State level, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has certain provisions for exempting telecommunications facilities from requiring development approval under the *State Planning Policy 5.2: Telecommunications Infrastructure*.

Specifically, Clause 5.1.1(iii) provides that:

“In addition to the existing exemptions under the Telecommunication Act, local governments should consider exempting telecommunications infrastructure from the requirement for development approval where:

- a) The infrastructure has a maximum height of 30 metres from finished ground level;*
- b) The proposal complies with the policy measures outlined in this policy; and*
- c) The proponent has undertaken notification of the proposal in a similar manner to ‘low impact facilities’ as defined and set out in the Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Industry Code (C564:2011)”*

Indara has sought advice from Town of Victoria Park on 11/07/2023 to confirm if it would consider exempting the project under this provision; Council has advised that it would not exempt the works, and required a development application. The development has thus been assessed against local and state planning policies, as noted in section 6 of the Planning Report.

Site History and Consultation

The objector has raised concerns about the history of the facility. Indara is unaware of any significant community opposition to this facility.

Mobile providers in Australia are required to upload information to the Radio Frequency National Site Archive or RFNSA (www.rfnsa.com.au). The RFNSA is the national archive for all existing and proposed telecommunications facilities in Australia. It stores information including but not limited to site establishment, work history, compliance reports, plans and community consultation.

Indara has reviewed records for previous upgrades that have taken place on this site under federal carrier powers. The RFNSA has records of eight (8) consultation processes having taken place between 2005 and 2023 for various carrier upgrades. Consultation processes for tower upgrades are governed by the industry *C564:2020 Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code*.

There is only record of one objection having ever been received – this was in 2021 and directed to Kordia, who was managing an upgrade for Optus. It appears that this objection was from the same community member who has objected to the current development application, based on comments made in the DA submission. There is no record of other objections or any known wider community concern about this facility.

Whilst the objector has raised some personal objections in relation to the facility, as well as mobile phone usage by community members generally, these do not appear to be representative of the views of the wider community.

It should also be noted that the landowner and leasing details requested by the objector will not be provided for privacy reasons.

Visual Impact

The objector has raised a number of concerns regarding visual impact and streetscape amenity. A detailed response was provided as part of the DA report, however Indara considers this proposal will, on balance, result in an improved visual outcome.

Monopoles are considered to be far less visually obtrusive than lattice towers. Lattice towers have hundreds of steel members and are much wider than monopoles, resulting in a generally bulkier and more cluttered appearance. Monopoles are more appropriate in an urban context; new lattice towers are not generally proposed in urban areas because of their more substantial appearance.

Whilst the proposed monopole will have a slimmer appearance, and will better integrate with existing street infrastructure, the facility will also benefit from some natural screening from mature vegetation in the area, notably on Oats Street, which will provide additional visual mitigation.

Amenity at ground level has been given significant consideration. Indara acknowledges that the existing site compound, given its age, displays a cluttered and tired appearance. Given the need for additional concrete slab installation, the commissioning of a mural has been proposed to offset any potential amenity concerns and provide an opportunity to improve the public realm through local art and placemaking. Indara is also willing to consider alternate fencing materials and finishes at Council's recommendation.

Town of Victoria Park Vision

Indara acknowledges the need for infrastructure to be delivered in a way that minimises visual impacts and maintains amenity amongst streetscapes. While the objection suggests that the removal of the tower would align with the town's vision for creating better public spaces and promoting community well-being, the Town of Victoria Park has several plans and strategies that reflect the need for high quality infrastructure, including telecommunications services for the area. These plans are expanded below.

- **ICT Strategic Plan**
The Town of Victoria Park's ICT Strategic Plan outlines their vision and mission for information and communications technology (ICT). It aims to provide value by enhancing services, integrating systems, ensuring security, and supporting best practices. This strategic plan gives importance to connectivity, which is a key factor in ensuring the management and enhancement of technology and services used across the locality. Telecommunications, in particular macro facilities, are vital to achieving this holistic approach to connectivity.
- **Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-2027**
The Access and Inclusion Plan reflects on the importance of providing people with disability the necessary information and access to information as readily as other people in the community. Digital and mobile communication is considered an important factor for transmitting information to members of society in an accessible and inclusive way, particularly for people with a disability who may not be able to access information or services in person.

- Integrated Transport Strategy

The Town of Victoria Park is striving to become more accessible and connected, with a focus on evolving ways of mobility such as driverless vehicles, trackless trams or EVs. Multi-modal travel also plays a significant role in mobility across the city, with real-time information about connections being an important factor to its success. Mobile connectivity plays a major role in supporting these modes, which can aid in driving innovation in mobility under the town's transport vision.

- Economic Development Strategy

Several pathways identified in the economic development strategy reflect the need for high quality infrastructure and technology to support the economic growth of the town. In particular, achieving pathway 3 – Local to Global Connections, pathway 4 – Smart Town – Digital Innovation and pathway 7 – High Value Sectors, such as knowledge industries. These pathways require investment in infrastructure across services and technology, such as mobile networks and connectivity within the locality.

It is noted there are several focuses amongst the town's strategic vision to improve connectivity, safety, accessibility and economic growth. These objectives cannot be achieved without high quality macro telecommunications infrastructure. It is considered that the proposal provides a balanced approach between achieving the coverage and capacity requirements for the existing facility with minimising visual impacts and maintaining a high-quality streetscape.

We trust that the above response satisfactorily addresses the matters raised by the objector. Please contact us if you have any questions or require further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rohan Montgomery".

Rohan Montgomery
Town Planner, Indara Group