

# NBN tower fight for Bethanga residents

BY SARAH DEAN

CONCERNED Bethanga residents against a proposed National Broadband Network tower being built near homes are instead calling for fibre optic cables for faster internet.

Residents say the town already has fibre optic cabling installed at the school and this should be extended to houses.

The effects of emissions from the tower on people's health, decreases in property values and views being ruined have been cited as among their concerns.

Resident Kaya Doll said internet connections improved two years ago when the government paid Telstra to lay fibre optic cables to schools.

"Each town should be looked at individually as to whether it is more suited to towers or fibre optic cable," she said.

"Our tower will cost over \$200,000, so why can't this money be used to improve the fibre optic cable instead of installing new and substandard technology?"

Mrs Doll is also concerned with emissions from the tower being hotly disputed with the World Health Organisation, which classifies the radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as possibly carcinogenic to humans under category 2B carcinogen.

"This category includes DDT, lead, and engine exhaust," she said.

Another resident Dorothy Jackson said she moved to the town 12 years ago when there was no talk of towers.

"I have a beautiful view from my veranda and if this goes ahead I will be directly looking at the tower emitting right across us," she said.

Towong Council has five objections against the planning application, but 15 signatures in support; it will make a decision in coming months.

NBN Co spokesman Michael Moore said NBN and its delivery partners selected the

proposed site as the best option based on planning requirements, the site's ability to provide acceptable coverage to the area, construction feasibility and the ability to secure use of the land.

"While the application for our preferred site is before council, we remain committed to consulting with the community on any concerns and explaining why we believe this is the best site for the tower," he said.

Mr Moore said the school's fibre connection was not installed or owned by NBN under the NBN network rollout, which meant it was not an option.

"The Australian government expects the NBN network to be built in a cost-effective way using technology best matched to each area of Australia," he said.

"Regardless of the technology solution used, homes and businesses should expect minimum download speeds of 25 megabytes per second, which is significantly faster than most people are receiving via ADSL."

Bethanga farmer David Elder, who intends to host the tower on the fringe of his property, said he was doing it for the "good of the community".

Mr Elder said the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency website stated that, based on research, there were no established health effects from the low level exposure to the radiofrequency electromagnetic energy from NBN base station antennas.

Meanwhile, there is also a proposal for a mobile phone tower to be erected at Bethanga under the mobile blackspot funding announced last week.

Telstra area general manager Steve Tinker said the location and planning approval would go to council at a future date.

An open town meeting will be held on July 23 at the Bethanga Memorial Hall.

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● Dorothy Jackson, Mel Routledge, Kaya Doll and Markus Doll have several concerns about a proposed NBN tower for Bethanga. They say it could be harmful to their health and want fibre optic cables. Picture: JOHN RUSSELL

## Mexico out of pageant

MEXICO CITY: Mexico has dropped out of the Miss Universe pageant over co-owner and US presidential candidate Donald Trump's "racist" remarks about Mexican migrants, as Latino anger toward the outspoken tycoon boils over.

Trump's comments about migrants have outraged Latin Americans and the Hispanic community in the United States.

Losing a Latin American contestant is a big setback for Miss Universe as the pageant is hugely popular in the region.

The governments of Mexico and Venezuela have both lacerated Trump.

In a rambling campaign announcement on June 16, Trump lashed out at Mexico and Mexican migrants, saying that they were bringing drugs, crime and "rapists" to the US.



● Ray Martin

## Ray Martin picked to review Q&A content

TV journalist Ray Martin has been appointed to review the ABC's controversial Q&A program.

The review was called by the ABC board following the June 22 program involving former terror suspect Zaky Mullah, which caused a storm of controversy.

Martin and former SBS managing director Shaun Brown will look at the key editorial decisions behind the program, including audience, panel and sub-

ject selection and on-air tweets.

The board said it agreed with ABC management that the decision to allow Mullah to speak live on the program was wrong.

"Given his criminal background and past public statements, the live broadcast meant that the ABC was not in a position to manage unpredictable or inappropriate actions or responses," the board said.

"There was inadequate

consideration given to important issues around his presence in the studio, considering his previous actions, his desire for the media spotlight and some of his public comments."

The program's executive producer has received a formal misconduct warning.

"The issues involved with considering Mullah's appearance should have been referred up to senior management in the television division under the ABC's

editorial policies," the board said.

The program is expected to enhance its security in the wake of the incident, on the advice of the Australian Federal Police.

Rather than heed calls to axe the program, the board said Q&A "should have a long future" on the ABC.

The review by Martin and Mr Brown will look at 22 episodes of the program, with a report published later this year.