

Resolution of Council

18 May 2026

Item 13.2

A Stronger Signal for the South - Improving Mobile Internet Connectivity in the Southern Part of the City of Sydney

Moved by Deputy Lord Mayor Councillor Miller, seconded by Councillor Kok –

It is resolved that:

(A) Council note that:

- (i) the southern part of the City of Sydney encompassing Waterloo, Alexandria, Rosebery, Zetland and Redfern, is experiencing rapid population and employment growth, with the City of Sydney population and housing figures projecting a population of 64,961 residents by 2046, a density that places exceptional and growing demand on mobile telecommunications infrastructure;
- (ii) Australian Competition and Consumer Commission internet activity data shows a consistent upward trend in Australian household data consumption, with remote and hybrid work requirements, video streaming and the proliferation of connected devices continuing to drive demand, trends that disproportionately affect high-density residential precincts such as those in the southern Local Government Area (LGA) where home-based data usage is concentrated;
- (iii) residents report a deficit in high-density mobile coverage and wireless broadband capacity in Waterloo, Alexandria, Rosebery, Zetland and Redfern, resulting in “dark zones” where mobile connectivity is unreliable or unavailable, caused by 3 distinct factors that are common to high-density urban environments emerging in many major cities around the world:
 - (a) cell breathing, where mobile towers shrink their effective range during peak periods as large numbers of devices compete for access to finite bandwidth;
 - (b) vegetation, which absorbs high-frequency 5G signals; and

- (c) high-density concrete apartment construction, which degrades signals as they pass through multiple walls;
 - (iv) the City of Sydney has invested significantly in Smart pole multi-function street poles across the LGA, with the capacity to host a range of urban data infrastructure, with the view to minimising visual clutter on the streetscape by combining many digital services through a single street pole;
 - (v) under the Telecommunications Act 1997 (Cth) telecommunications infrastructure does not require a City of Sydney Development Application; this means that while Council prefer that the City's protocol be followed, telcos can install infrastructure on private dwellings which can lead to uncoordinated infrastructure and clutter in the public domain;
 - (vi) according to research from the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network Consumer Sentiment Tracker (July 2025), almost 9 in 10 Australians need constant home internet, and 3 in 4 need constant mobile access to participate in society, making connectivity as critical as water or electricity; and
 - (vii) ensuring equitable connectivity and avoiding 'dark spots' - especially in the southern part of the City - requires a long-term commitment to existing protocols and collaboration with telcos, Ausgrid, utilities and Council to maximise the usage of existing infrastructure where it exists;
- (B) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to write to Telecommunication providers operating in our area, requesting:
 - (i) information about their level of coverage in our area to identify connectivity challenges including any 'dark zones' in the south of the city, and what plan they have to roll out more mobile and 5G telecommunications infrastructure to meet future demand; and
 - (ii) that they work with the City of Sydney to maximise use of existing street Smart poles to improve mobile signal and internet connectivity in the community, particularly the southern parts of the City, while minimising the public space amenity and visual impact of declining to use Council assets; and
- (C) the Chief Executive Officer be requested to prepare a report to Council via the CEO Update outlining what smart infrastructure already exists; an explanation of options and opportunities to maximise usage; and how to best deliver reliable, strong signals to residents, businesses and visitors – especially in the southern part of the City.

Carried unanimously.

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