

Listen to residents

IN the letter "City must come clean on the allocation process of cell towers" (Cape Times, July 26), Mr Cassim wrote about the need to uphold the precautionary principle with respect to the siting of cellphone towers in residential areas and near school or hospital buildings.

Highlighting that the views of residents need to be taken into account when towers are erected in these areas.

There has been growing concern around the lack of meaningful public participation when it comes to the placement of masts in Cape Town due in part to changes in legislation and policy. The media has reported on the dissatisfaction of communities in this regard in Edgemoor, Croydon, Constantia, Plumstead, Heathfield and the Constantiaberg Mediclinic. These stories are currently featured on the website of EMRSA (Electromagnetic Radiation South Africa).

Even unauthorised, illegal structures cannot be immediately removed without a lengthy legal process and for most communities this isn't an option due to the steep costs.

For example, Constantia residents won a High Court case against MTN over a year ago, but this is now pending appeal while the mast remains operational. MTN refused to turn it off in the interim despite over 90% of homes polled in the area petitioning against the mast in 2011 and 2014.

With distances between masts being continually reduced due to new technology, surely it's time to start giving homeowners more democratic choice about installations on their own

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turf? In the light of growing evidence demonstrating ecological and health risks associated with electromagnetic radiation, more precaution around the placement of masts would be prudent.

Especially considering an observation by the World Health Organisation that "in most societies ultimately decide what is an acceptable risk not governmental agencies or corporations".

Justine Hansen
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Note: The Cape Times incorrectly edited the last quote which actually reads:

"in most societies, even though it may take a long time, communities ultimately decide what is an acceptable risk, not governmental agencies or corporations".