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**MOVED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON**

**That Notice of Motion 5/2012 be dealt with immediately.**

**SECONDED COUNCILLOR REWELL**

**CARRIED.**

**11. NOTICE OF MOTION – DEFERRED FROM ORDINARY MEETING OF 24 JULY 2012**

**5/2012 CONCERN REGARDING THE CURRENT ROLL OUT OF SMART METERS IN MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE - PROPOSED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON**

**1. Purpose**

The purpose of this motion is to propose that Council write to the State Government requesting that the Victorian Government make voluntary the compulsory installation of smart meters within the Shire, until such time as a guarantee of health and safety can be provided guaranteeing safety from non thermal chronic exposure to Radio Frequency (RF) radiation from the smart meters that are currently being installed on homes and public buildings across the Shire.

**2. Background**

In February 2006, the Victorian Government announced that it would require electricity distribution companies in Victoria to install advanced electrical meters (smart meters) to all small business and residential customers as part of the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) program. The program involves replacing existing electricity meters with digital electricity meters that record energy consumption every half hour and can be remotely read and reset via wide area network communications. The electricity distribution companies have forecast that they will install more than 2.6 million smart meters over four years. The rollout of the smart meters commenced in September 2009. As at February 2012, more than 1 million have been installed, which is almost 40 per cent of the total. The rollout is expected to be completed by December 2013.

Installation of AMI is currently in progress across Mount Alexander Shire.

**3. Issues**

Some Victorian residents whose smart meters have already been turned on are reporting adverse health effects, typically palpitations, dizziness, inability to concentrate or insomnia. These symptoms are similar to those reported in other parts of the world where AMI has been installed, such as North America and Europe.

Within the Shire, a substantial number of people have expressed concern about the smart meter roll-out. A 2011 petition to the Legislative Assembly calling for a halt to the roll-out, carried 950 signatures from Mount Alexander Shire residents.

While a range of concerns are being expressed, including cost increases, loss of privacy, billing errors, fire danger, this Notice of Motion focuses on potential health effects of the RF radiation transmitted by smart meters and seeks a guarantee from State Government that the health of Mount Alexander Shire citizens will be given due consideration.

The State Government's energy regulator, Energy Safe Victoria clearly states that it does not take responsibility for assessing the health aspects of radiation from smart meters.

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ESV's draft report Safety of Advanced Metering Infrastructure in Victoria (June 2012) states that "ESV is not responsible for overseeing the regulation of radiation and high frequency radio signals. Smart meters are subject to regulatory arrangements made by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). This includes compliance with the electromagnetic exposure limits developed by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)."

The relevant ARPANSA radiation standard, Radiation Protection Standard No 3 (2002) sets limits for human exposure to radio frequency (RF) fields of such intensity as to cause heating effects in human tissue; so-called 'thermal effects'. While ARPANSA acknowledges that there is a level of concern about biological effects of much weaker levels of RF radiation, it concludes that there is insufficient data to be able to set a standard for non-thermal effects of RF radiation.

The World Health Organisation recognises that radiation from mobile phones, which is similar in frequency and strength to that from smart meters, is possibly carcinogenic to humans.

Internationally, a number of governments have brought in voluntary installation of smart meters. For example in 2011 the British Government made wireless smart meters voluntary, in response to ongoing concerns.

#### 4. Conclusion

While acknowledging that there is no consistent scientific evidence for ill-health effects due to exposure to RF radiation sources such as smart meters, it is recognised that there is a substantial level of concern within the community regarding the potential for adverse effects, including credible reports of individuals suffering debilitating symptoms, which add to a large body of international documentation of adverse experiences. ARPANSA itself recommends a precautionary approach, requiring the minimisation of unnecessary exposure of the public to RF fields. With this in mind it is deemed appropriate to request that the Victorian Government halt the compulsory installation of smart meters within the Shire, until such times as a guarantee of health safety can be provided.

#### MOTION

1. That Council write to the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Michael O'Brien, requesting that, in the light of concerns regarding the potential ill health effects of smart meters, the compulsory roll-out of wireless smart meters within Mount Alexander Shire be made voluntary until a public statement can be provided, guaranteeing safety from non-thermal chronic exposure to RF radiation from the smart meters that are currently being installed on homes and public buildings across the Shire; and
2. That the response from the Minister be brought to a future Council Meeting.

#### **MOVED COUNCILLOR HENDERSON**

1. **That Council write to the Minister for Energy and Resources, the Honourable Michael O'Brien, requesting that, in the light of concerns regarding the potential ill health effects of smart meters, the compulsory roll-out of wireless smart meters within Mount Alexander Shire be made voluntary until a public statement can be provided, guaranteeing safety from non-thermal chronic exposure to RF radiation from the smart meters that are currently being installed on homes and public buildings across the Shire; and**
2. **That the response from the Minister be brought to a future Council Meeting.**

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3. That Council ask the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) to put forward a Notice of Motion at the next State Council to say:

*"We request the MAV investigate the possible health problems associated with Smart Meters and, based on the outcome, to take appropriate action."*

SECONDED COUNCILLOR REWELL

CARRIED