

5. CORRESPONDENCE

a) Saturn Overhead Cables

The following letter has been received from Mr Jack Travis, Secretary of the Heathcote Valley Community Association.

“At the latest Heathcote Valley Community Association meeting, the recently publicised debate on the merits of Saturn’s overhead cabling was discussed. The following letter was submitted by one of our Committee members and the Committee felt that the contents fully expressed the feeling of the Association. I believe it is important to take on board the feelings of the community at large, before any action is taken by the Council. A point that is borne out by the recent fiasco with the Telecom tower. It is important that early notice is taken before Council approvals through City Plan and Resource Consent processes are in place.

Copies of the correspondence will be forwarded to the Mayor, with a request for comment. I would hope to receive a response from your Board and ask for your united support in opposing this happening in our Garden City. Not just a reference to the City Plan, claiming that it allows such overhead cables. We, the Association believe that any such new overhead cabling of such a major visual impact must pose an adverse effect on the environment as defined in section 17 of the Resource Management Act 1991.

“I have recently returned from a visit to Upper Hutt where I was horrified at the sight of Saturn’s overhead cabling. The new cables appear to be approximately the diameter of my forearm and were strung below the existing wires presenting an imposing blot on the landscape.

I had been following the debate in The Press prior to my holiday but now that I have seen what the new cables will be like I most definitely wish to take part in it!

What particularly concerns me is that I have mentioned the matter to most of my friends and none of them were aware that approval had been given for Saturn to add overhead cables to the streets of Christchurch. In fact, the general response I received was – “oh, they won’t be allowed to do that in Christchurch!” They were all amazed when I pointed out that Saturn have already been given approval to add overhead cables to existing power poles. No one I have spoken to was aware of a petition in the libraries and council offices against the overhead cables.

I also raised the issue at the Heathcote Valley Community Association where people were mostly aware of some of the facts but not of the extent of the visual impact Saturn cables will make. Neither were they aware of the petitions against them. They have endorsed me to write on their behalf to express most strongly that Saturn should not be able to proceed forthwith. Here follow our main points:

- 1. Saturn cables are very thick and bunched together to create such a large thick ‘blackness’. You do not simply look ‘through it’ as you may a normal power line.*
- 2. Saturn cables (in Lower Hutt) are strung below existing power lines closer to the street. This makes them more visually obvious and will also have a significant effect on tree pruning (which often already looks like tree vandalism).*

With all the wonderful improvements happening in Christchurch (particularly with waterways) I find it difficult to stomach that Saturn can go ahead and pollute the view so obviously for the sake of their own profit. Surely this is an opportunity to exact sufficient input from them to speed up the change to underground cabling. I understand Cr O'Rourke put forward a suggestion that treating the movement of cables to underground as a revenue item instead of a capital item would make it considerably more affordable. There must be some innovative solutions somewhere to at least go part way towards averting the visual pollution of Christchurch on a grand scale.

When I first saw the cables in Upper Hutt I was immediately reminded of a tiny Spanish village high in the Appennines totally ruined by thick ugly black power lines everywhere that you looked. Is this the lasting image we want tourists to depart Christchurch with?

Finally, I do not believe the residents of Christchurch understand the scale of the matter. I certainly didn't until I happened to visit the Hutt Valley. Has Mayor Garry Moore seen these cables in Wellington? Anyone who has could surely foresee the outcry there will surely be once the cables go up. I plead with you to consider acting before the cables go up and at least let us know how the ratepayers in this city will benefit from having their streets framed in black”.

Peter Mitchell, the Legal Services Manager, will be in attendance at the meeting to advise Board members.

**Chairman's
Recommendation:** For discussion