

# The Sydney Morning Herald

NATIONAL NSW ADVERTISING

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## City of Sydney pushes back against Telstra's planned payphone billboards

By [Jacob Saulwick](#)

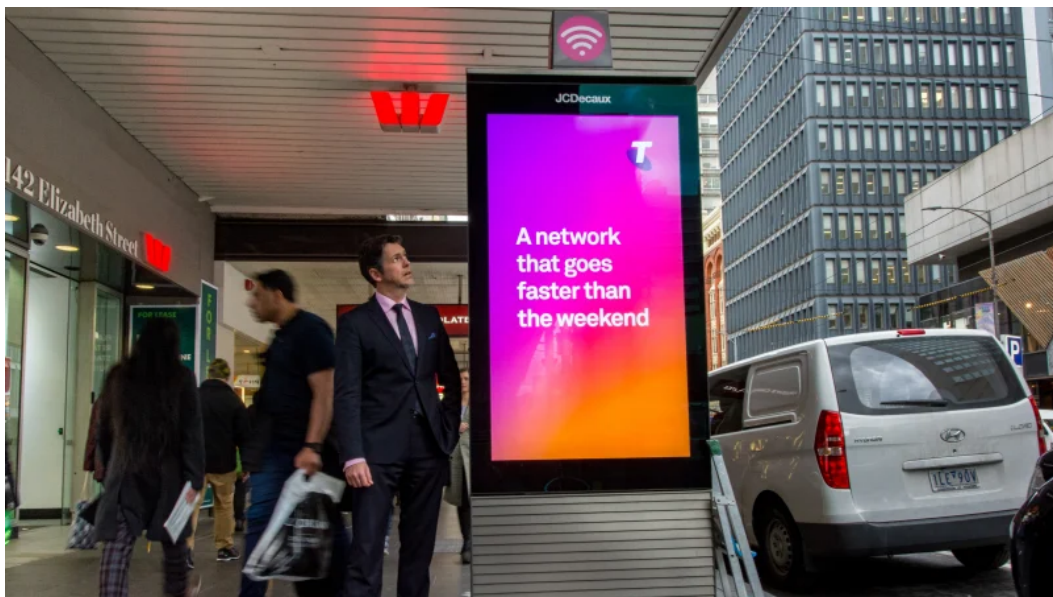
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Telstra would be unable to make planned upgrades to payphones in a way that might include larger digital advertising hoardings under a push by the City of Sydney.

The practice of attaching digital advertising billboards to payphones flared as an issue of controversy in Melbourne recently. The City of Melbourne council rejected a bid by the telco to install 81 boards on public phones in the CBD, [and is reportedly attempting to remove 39 boards](#) already in place.



The City of Sydney council is pushing back against plans by Telstra to install billboards such as these in Melbourne's CBD.

The issue relates to a potential legal mechanism allowing Telstra to install upgraded payphones, which it can also use for digital billboard advertising, without council approval.

It is understood that none of these upgraded payphones has been installed in Sydney.

At its meeting on Monday night, the City of Sydney resolved that Lord Mayor Clover Moore would write to the federal Communications Minister seeking a determination that payphones not be used primarily for advertising.

The motion was put by Liberal councillor Craig Chung and was supported unanimously by the other councillors.

Cr Chung's motion states that Telstra is in dispute with "a number of city councils around Australia about the installation of public payphones with significant private advertising billboards and other telecommunications infrastructure".

The motion adds that Telstra appears to be using its obligation to provide universal communications services across the country "as a 'sword' to overcome any requirement to obtain approvals from city councils to erect unnecessary payphones to be used as unregulated and unwanted billboards".

Cr Moore said supporting the motion was part of her effort "to ensure the necessary infrastructure is delivered without negative impacts on our streets and public spaces."

Separately, the City of Sydney released a statement on Monday saying that larger payphone panels proposed to be installed by Telstra were not "low-impact facilities" that could be installed without council approval.

A Telstra spokesman said it believed its new payphones were able to be installed as low-impact facilities.

"In the majority of cases, Telstra is planning to upgrade and relocate existing payphones, not install additional phones," the spokesman said.

"Our vision for the new payphones is to ensure the technology offered to all users in the City of Sydney is comparable to other major cities such as New York City and Tokyo.

"Any use of the screens on the new payphones for commercial advertising is subject to a separate approval process by the City of Sydney in response to a planning development application," the Telstra spokesman said.



**Jacob Saulwick**



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