

Phone tower tumour fear

MICHAEL OWEN

THE State Government will investigate fears thousands of Adelaide office workers are at risk of developing brain tumours because they work under mobile phone towers on buildings.

There are almost 200 mobile phone towers in central Adelaide alone, including on the Santos building on King William St, the SGIC Building and State Administration Centre in Victoria Square, and the Riverside Centre on North Tce.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority's Register of Radiocommuni-

cations Licences reveals not one section of Adelaide's CBD is free of mobile phone base stations that are used to route mobile phone calls.

A spate of brain tumours among RMIT university staff working just metres under two mobile phone towers in a Melbourne CBD building has sparked inquiries by the Victorian Government and the university.

The top two floors of the Bourke St building were closed on Thursday and 100 employees sent home for two weeks.

The brain tumour scare in Melbourne has led to health fears among the thousands of office

workers in Adelaide's CBD, many who were unaware they were working under towers.

Industrial Affairs Minister Michael Wright yesterday said he would investigate the issue.

"It is something I will take advice from in consultation with Safework SA," he said.

Hugh Rowell, a partner in law firm Rowell Forrest & Co, which has occupied the top level of the SGIC Building since 1998, said the firm was concerned for its staff and would closely monitor health and safety issues.

Kate Ellis, the federal Labor member for the seat of Adelaide, said people working on the top

levels of office buildings directly under towers, especially pregnant women, had a right to be concerned about their health.

She has contacted the State and Federal Governments asking to be briefed on the placement of mobile phone towers in Adelaide.

"At the moment most people would be completely unaware of where phone towers are and how close they work to them," Ms Ellis said yesterday.

SA Unions secretary Janet Giles said "no workers should have their lives put in jeopardy".

"The plethora of mobile towers across office buildings means this has to be dealt with swiftly - we

don't want another epidemic like that of asbestos victims," Ms Giles said.

Public Service Association chief industrial officer Peter Christopher said the union expected employers to undertake regular safety tests.

Phone company Motorola leases the Santos building's roof, with the last safety report handed to building manager Knight Frank about two years ago.

Mobile Carriers Forum executive director Tanya Stoianoff said "there is no credible scientific evidence of health effects from living or working near a mobile phone base station".

Inspiration on Outback odyssey



STORY TIME: Michael Jeffery listens to Cliff Coulthard.

NIGEL AUSTIN
RURAL EDITOR

A TINY Outback Aboriginal community in the Flinders Ranges has become a beacon of hope for indigenous enterprises, Governor-General Michael Jeffery said.

On a visit to the Coulthard family's Iga Warta on the Year of the Outback's Back to the Bush trip, Mr Jeffery was inspired by the internationally-renowned tourism venture's development. Iga Warta, 50km east of Copley on the road to Arkaroola, is one of the nation's most successful Aboriginal-run tourism ventures.

It offers a cultural experience, enjoyed by thousands.

One key to Iga Warta's success is it is a family operation run by six brothers. Cliff Coulthard said his father had taught him the need to work together as Australians and share Aboriginal culture and bush tucker with the rest of the world. Mr Jeffery said it was a wonderful example of a successful Aboriginal enterprise.

He revealed a new national plan to relook at how Australian history was taught in schools.

"Instead of teaching 200 years of history, we should teach 65,000 years of Australian history," he said. "It's an important story about life skills, environmental care, spiritual training, preparing the young for adulthood and sharing." Mr Jeffery said the Federal Government was heading in this direction with Aboriginal history to be taught in schools as a part of Australian history.

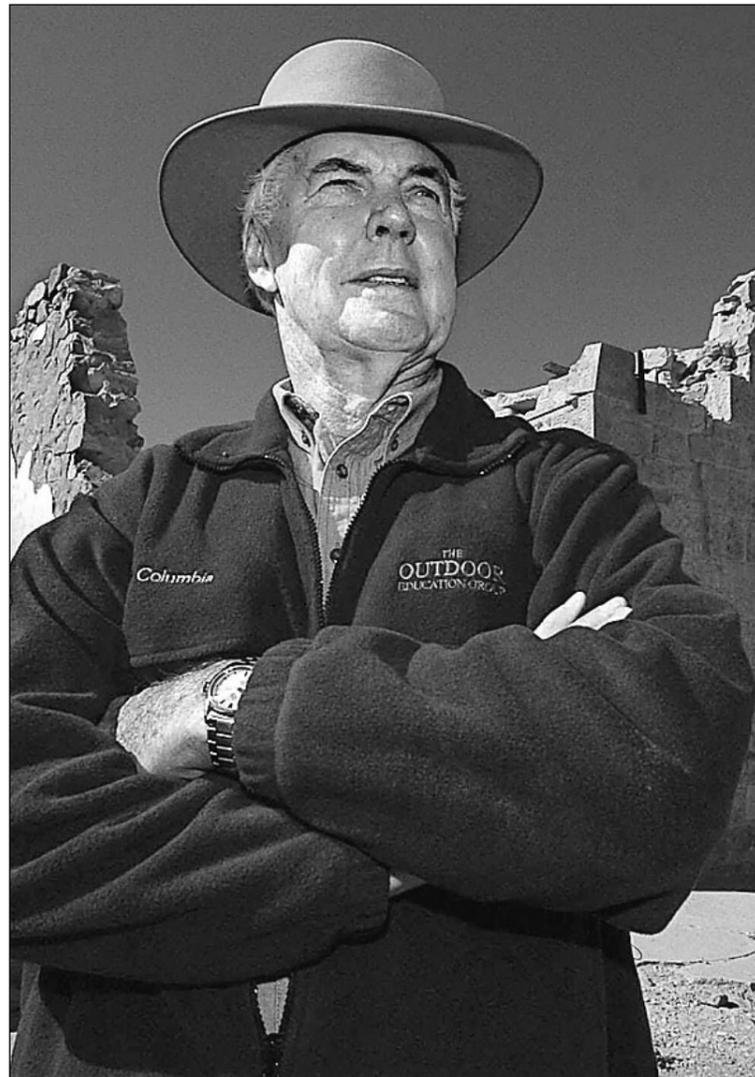
Mr Coulthard said things were really working out for his family at Iga Warta.

"I think we're on the right track, a lot of the problems were a communication barrier and not racist," he said.

"We get a little bit of help and it encourages us to succeed. We have a long road to travel but the roads are getting shorter."

The Back to the Bush expedition travelled from Iga Warta to Copley, Aroona Dam, Farina, Marree, the dog fence and Dulkaninna station on the Birdsville Track yesterday.

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SURVEYING THE SCENE: The Governor-General at the ruins of the old Farina township yesterday.

Pictures: MARK BRAKE

Fight on diabetes

GROUP intervention by dietitians and exercise physiologists will be covered by Medicare for people with type two diabetes, the Federal Government says.

About 7 per cent of Australian adults have type two diabetes.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says 89 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women with type two diabetes are overweight.

Poor diet, inadequate exercise and excess weight contribute to increased health problems for them.

Coded text 'of terror'

NINE men suspected of preparing for a terrorist act communicated by covert text message and referred to each other by women's names, a court has been told.

Khaled Cheikho, 32, was among eight men arrested in November in counter-terrorism raids in Sydney.

During his bail application in the NSW Supreme Court, Crown Prosecutor Wendy Abraham, QC, said Cheikho had "covert phones" taken out in false names and used to communicate with his co-accused in code. The hearing continues.

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