Gold Coast Bulletin

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THE sign warned there was a fibre optic cable in the area -- and it was right.

According to telecommunications company Optus, the looped cable on the right of the picture is the broken fibre optic cable that caused a major landline, mobile phone and internet meltdown for more than one million of its users in Queensland and Northern NSW on Tuesday.

Only metres away is a white warning sign installed by the telecommunications giant indicating one of their cables was in the area.

Optus released the photo to refute the Gold Coast City Council claim that the cable was not where it was expected to be.

"You always have to be wary of leaping to conclusions when finding who was at fault," said Optus director of government and corporate affairs Maha Krishnapillai.

"Our inquiries show that the cable was well signposted. The incident happened literally 2m from the post.

"It appears that perhaps the contractor simply made a mistake."

Gold Coast City Council acting Mayor Daphne McDonald insisted that 'best practice' procedures were followed during the works to install a section of pipeline for the southeast water grid.

"We were aware of the marker posts, as were the independent contractors utilised in making assessments," said Cr McDonald.

"These included an expert cable locating company, a survey and an Optus representative who attended the site during the design phase to clarify and confirm where the cable was."

The council also said it called Dial Before You Dig, a free national service that helps identify underground utilities.

Dial Before You Dig yesterday confirmed they had been contacted about the project.

According to the National Utility Locating Contractors Association secretary, John Croxson, it was standard practice to 'pothole' to locate a utility pipe or cable before excavation. This involves a machine that uses water and compressed air to expose the cable or by digging manually with a shovel.

When the utility line is found it is then marked by the locator.

"To avoid disruption, NULCA recommends that proper utility location be undertaken before all construction begins," said Mr Croxson.

"The best person to do this is a utility locator who has met the professional standards required of a NULCA accredited locator."

The pipeline is part of the plan to link the Gold Coast desalination plant at Tugun to the regional water grid.

The council is in charge of the project and has subcontracted the work to Abigroup.

Once the works are completed they will be handed over to the State Government.

An Abigroup spokeswoman said the company was still investigating the incident and it was too early to release findings.

But it stood by the media release issued by the council on Wednesday which said the communications cable was not where it was expected to be.

The Abigroup hopes to complete its investigations by early next week.