



## Optus Network Rollout in 1993:

# Has Competition Reached You?

**Telecom has four more years to achieve the upgrade of the national telecommunications network which will extend customer access to Optus throughout Australia.**

The upgrading has a long way to go yet, and Optus is getting impatient.

By July 1997, Telecom's network must be capable of interconnecting with Optus's network throughout Australia. The existence of these requirements is crucial for the introduction of competition because Optus cannot provide a service in areas without such capability.

As of August 1993, Optus provided a service in 23 exchange areas throughout NSW, Victoria, Queensland and in the ACT, the site of the first pre-selection ballot. Optus has announced the expansion of its services into eight more areas including Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Launceston by December 1993. Darwin is the only capital city not to be serviced this year. Expansion into further areas is, of course, planned - but the Optus PR machine is unwilling to reveal further details lest consumer expectations be built up only to be disappointed.

The table shown below lists the areas which Optus is currently servicing and the dates and areas for the introduction of further Optus services. The data reveals that relatively large numbers of Australians will not be participating in the benefits of competition this year.

It is quite clear that the network rollout operates in favour of urban centres and the east coast of Australia. It will be some time before inland residents will be able to choose between Telecom and Optus. In the interim, these residents will also be unable to avail themselves of Telecom's Flexiplans, as the availability of a Flexiplan is predicated on the basic capability which also allows carrier interconnection.

The most startling aspect of the data (compiled in June 1993) is the incomplete penetration of the Optus

network in areas which have been formally opened up to competition from Optus. As many as 7 per cent of lines in the Melbourne exchange area will be unable to use Optus. When Optus moves into Adelaide and Perth in late September, 6 per cent of lines will be unable to choose between the two carriers.

*In 17 of the 31 exchange areas listed below, less than 75% of lines in the area will be reached by Optus.* In the exchange area of Morwell in Victoria (area code 051), only 18 per cent of all lines will have the capacity to use Optus services.

Is this competition?

To be sure, Telecom cannot provide the goods overnight. However, it is noteworthy that on the whole, exchange areas in which businesses are concentrated have early access, while other exchange areas (or even consumers within Optus serviced areas) to suffer the Optus versus Telecom advertising war in the stoic silence of the disenfranchised?

When will Cootamundra and Wyndham get the vote? (Not to mention the people of Dodge's Ferry, Tasmania.) □

Christos Mantziaris

## Optus Service Areas in 1992/93

Actual or Projected Date of Service Availability	Exchange Location & Code	% of Exchange Lines Reached
18 November 1992	Melbourne (03)	93%
	Sydney (02)	96%
	Canberra (06)	97%
	Gosford (043)	50%
	Newcastle (049)	47%
	Penrith (047)	70%
	Wollongong (042)	45%
	Geelong (052)	83%
	Mornington (059)	82%
1 May 1993	Cambelltown (046)	52%
	Windsor (045)	75%
	Ballarat (053)	47%
	Bendigo (054)	46%
	Warragul (056/059)	54%
1 July 1993	Brisbane (07)	96%
	Beaunesert (075)	90%
	Caboolture (074)	67%
	Lismore (066)	57%
	Karumburra (056)	32%
	Kyneton (054)	39%
	Mildura (050)	51%
	Morwell (051)	18%
	Seymour (057)	33%
28 September 1993	Adelaide (08)	94%
30 September 1993	Perth (09)	94%
	Pinjarra (09)	34%
	Bairnsdale (051)	56%
1 December 1992	Hobart (002)	90%
	Burnie (004)	83%
	Devonport (004)	89%
	Launceston (003)	85%