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The majority of the panel concluded that the Centre's dependence on its two major sponsors, the Government and Telecom, remained high, and felt that there are no credible plans or strategies in place to change this situation in the foreseeable future.

On the issue of funding, the panel's conclusions may be somewhat harsh given the difficulty of finding new sources and attracting funding in the current financial climate, and also the existence of a number of institutions working in the same area and competing for the limited funds and project work available. Dr Hudson acknowledged problems with attracting corporate support, particularly from multinationals, and noted the need to decide whether corporate short term research could be mixed with public policy agendas.

Management

The panel was critical of CIRCIT's management, saying that financial reporting and information systems do not provide adequate information for the board, and that 'overhead structures and expenditure appear disproportionately high relative to comparable establishments'. CIRCIT's relatively luxurious offices in a tower building on Melbourne's prestigious South Bank have certainly been another source of envy from less well endowed establishments. The panel noted that the lease and buildings services costs of around half a million dollars were almost equal to the **total** annual funding for the CLC. While this may not be a fair comparison, it suggests at the very least a need to re-consider the organisation's expenditure priorities.

Status and National Focus

The majority view was that CIRCIT has failed to 'attract and retain a critical mass of researchers with credibility and standing', and the panel noted that none of the program leaders from 1991 remain with the organisation. At the same time, a number of alternative research centres have developed or expanded. The panel said that

CIRCIT remains a 'very much Victorian-based organisation'.

Options for the Future

The panel saw three possibilities for the board and the governing members of CIRCIT to consider in terms of the institution's future:

- **Wind it up:** this would involve and estimated cost of around \$1m.
- **Re-constitute it** and start again with a new Director: this option would require a considerable financial commitment on the part of the current sponsors.
- **Re-locate** in related centres within the constituent universities: the panel felt that this could provide 'a better and more cost-effective administrative and management environment', and thought that this option deserved serious consideration as the surest way to preserve the vision behind CIRCIT's mission, with a less risky transition that the re-building option.

Minority Report

Dr Heather Hudson submitted a seven-page minority report which contained only mild or implied criticism of CIRCIT, primarily that its need to 'focus and articulate its research agenda more clearly'. Having done this, it need to 'reconsider the number and expertise of the.....professional staff it employs'.

She felt that external relations, research management and administration are too much work for one person to handle, and that 'the hiring of a new Director provides an opportunity to rethink this structure'. She saw no compelling need to relocate within a university.

Dr Hudson briefly described a number of comparable international organisations such as IDATE, the IIC, PICT and the Annenberg Washington Program, and considered whether any of their structures or funding arrangements might be applicable to CIRCIT. She suggested a number of funding models which might be considered. □

'National' Pay TV: It's Here!

Residents of Townsville and Cairns have the unlikely distinction of being the recipients of Australia's first ABA-approved pay TV service into domestic premises.

The ABA last month granted a subscription narrowcasting licence to Paynet Telecommunications Pty Ltd to provide a range of services including community, education, children's, sport, drama and music video. Paynet proposes to use a combination of coaxial and optic fibre cable to deliver its services in an area where satellite coverage is less than satisfactory.

Theoretically there is nothing to stop Paynet delivering these services anywhere in Australia, as their licence is valid nationally. The current prohibition on pay TV services (which expires on 31 December 1994) applies only to the use of MDS as a delivery system.

So the catch for Paynet, if they are interested in expanding their services and pipping satellite and MDS delivery to the post, is that they must use cable delivery, and they have to provide the same programming in all areas.

As *CU* went to press, it was announced that a company headed by Dick Rowe, former Ministerial staffer and well known industry consultant, had been awarded 28 licences for cable delivery of services in the same areas and also in Darwin, Launceston and the Sunshine Coast. □