



## TV Ad Placement, EC-Style

In Australia, the battle over advertising time on television has focused on keeping the level of ads per hour within reasonable bounds. In Europe, they are also concerned about the placement of ads.

It seems the production sector there has been more successful in lobbying against insensitive scheduling of ads, particularly during drama and movies.

The EC's Television Without Frontiers directive stipulates a maximum of 12 minutes advertising per show, with programs over 45 minutes to be interrupted only once in each 45 minute period, with one further break for any program over 100 minutes.

Overall, advertising is limited to 15 per cent of daily transmission times, and there are to be no ads at all in religious, news, or children's programs lasting less than 30 minutes.

## Event Siphoning

**FOOTNOTE:** European experience suggests that major events, like sport, on advertiser-funded channels will soon become a thing of the past.

The costly rights to many key sports events and series are likely to go to local pay TV sports channels, which can tailor their programming to specific local interests and pay for entire seasons of events

A massive new pan-European sports network, Eurosport, will provide tough competition for the top international sporting events against other existing or planned channels with a sports focus. Eurosport, the result of a merger between Eurosport and The European Sports Network, will have enormous bargaining power and funds. Its shareholders include Canal Plus, TFI and the sports network ESPN.

But Eurosport, which is advertiser-funded, will almost certainly concentrate on the biggest, most glamorous one-off events, while pay TV siphons off the rest. □

# That Ballot: Carriers Wrangle

**Telecom has refused to negotiate further over a planned mass media campaign connected with the consumer ballot for carrier choice, with attendant costs estimated at around \$5 million, and has asked AUSTEL for formal arbitration.**

Back in December, CU (#84) predicted that consumers would 'soon' be asked to choose between Telecom and Optus as the primary carrier for their long distance calls. As it turns out, our prediction was a bit premature.

The original starting date for the consumer ballot to choose carriers was first moved from June to August, and now looks to be held even later in 1993.

Telecom and Optus negotiations on preselection matters have bogged down on a couple of issues. One major cause of the delay, which was finally referred to AUSTEL for a formal determination, concerned the 0015 international facsimile number. AUSTEL determined that the 0015 service should not be included in the basket of preselected services, and in the process, laid down principles for determining whether other services should be included.

The most recent dispute concerns the public education campaign to accompany the balloting process.

AUSTEL itself identified the need for a public education campaign during earlier negotiations. Both carriers agreed that such a campaign was necessary, and that they would jointly fund it. The campaign is to be quite separate from that already being conducted by Telecom and Optus to raise public awareness of the telecommu-

nications choices now available, reportedly at a cost running into over \$100 million.

What is now in dispute is the scope, cost and overall thrust of the public education campaign, in particular whether it should involve television advertising.

The view of AUSTEL and the agencies tendering to conduct the campaign is that TV advertising will be necessary initially to raise public awareness of the ballot process, and will need to be followed by more detailed information in the press and other media.

The Communications Law Centre and other groups representing the interests of domestic telephone users have regularly stressed the need for impartial information which can be clearly understood and is widely disseminated so that all consumers can understand the reasons for the balloting process and make an informed choice.

Without an adequate public information campaign, an informed public choice of carrier is simply not possible.

AUSTEL faces an important public interest responsibility in resolving this dispute in favour of a better informed public.

AUSTEL called for submissions from the carriers, and its preliminary analysis of the issues has been released for comment by interested parties.

AUSTEL effectively allowed two working days for consumer interests to lodge submissions and two more days for the arbitration and final report - hardly adequate for such an important issue some might think. □