



# The TIO And Phone Costs

Since *CU* last reported on telecommunications pricing, the office of the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has become fully operational.

We thought that in this 1994 pricing issue, it might be of interest to readers to know how many inquiries/complaints the office has received about telephone-related costs, and the nature of those inquiries/complaints.

It transpires that there is no ready answer to these questions. The actual setting of tariffs is not within the TIO's jurisdiction; it can only look into complaints about the failure of the carrier to supply a service in accordance with a tariff.

Nevertheless, the TIO's office was able to tell us that the main areas of concern fall into the following categories:

- the \$50 connection/reconnection fee;
- the cost of changing account details such as name or address, which at times can be \$50; and
- the \$30 fee for a silent line, which is also charged for omissions of address from the White Pages.

The TIO does not hold specific statistics on the number of inquiries it has received on cost issues. Rather, these are absorbed into two categories in

TIO records: 'basic service' and 'tariff (failure to charge in accordance with).

The TIO had to mid-September received 728 inquiries/complaints about basic service and 128 about tariffs. In a cautious response to *CU*'s request for information, the office said that 'inquiries regarding the cost issues noted above have been fairly consistent since the scheme opened. That is, suffice to say they are issues of concern amongst consumers, and therefore do indicate that they touch on the issue of affordability'. □

## DON'T MISS THIS CONFERENCE!

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS AFTER 1997: CARRIAGE, CONVERGENCE, CONSUMERS

Wednesday 9 November, 1994

9:00am - 5:00pm

Masonic Centre,

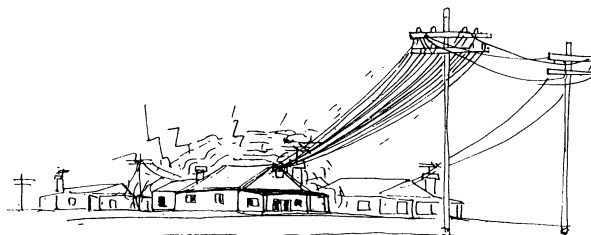
279 Castlereagh Street, Sydney

**Will there be more telecommunications carriers?**

**What rights and obligations will they have to each other? To Others? Will broadcasters also be carriers? Who will have access rights to whose infrastructure?**

Keynote address by Richard Klingler, Lawyer and Research Fellow, Brookings Institute, USA. Other speakers from the carriers, industry, the regulators and consumers. Attend this wide ranging public debate on the future communications policy before submissions close to the Telecommunications Policy Review - 25 November 1994.

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