



... Continued from page 9

AUSTEL's other recent reports largely cover competition policy issues and are listed in Policy File (p 36).

A final report which CU understands has been prepared but, as we went to press, had not been publicly released by the Minister's office is AUSTEL's September Quality of Service quarterly bulletin. The Minister's scrutiny of and interest in AUSTEL reports, including service quality and carrier performance, is welcome. However, the delay in releasing important AUSTEL reports can only result in a public which is less than adequately informed on telecommunications issues.

TIO's First Annual Report

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman's (TIO) first *Annual Report* released in December, chronicles the large number of disputes the carriers still fail to settle internally, and clearly demonstrates the value of having a TIO.

In its first year of operation, the TIO office handled over 10,000 cases (over 80 per cent were enquiries and the remainder escalated to the consultation stage (9 per cent), the complaints stage (also 9 per cent), while 72 (or less than one per cent) reached the dispute stage. Not surprisingly, billing complaints represent the largest percentage (35 per cent) of cases received. The next largest categories (at just over 10 per cent each) were about faults and basic service. □

Holly Raiche



Help For Phone Users

Telecom deserves a pat on the back for two recent publications, *A Guide to Using Telecom's Telephone Service* and a booklet, *Helpful Information About Your Telecom Service*, which is being distributed free along with customer accounts and is a shorter version of the Guide.

The latter, available free on request, includes much useful and detailed information such as what the telephone service provides, the time it is likely to take to get faults repaired, and the availability of credit management options.

Unfortunately, Telecom seems to have failed to let some of its customer service staff know about the Guide, despite promoting it to the public through advertising. The SMH (14 Feb) reported that at least two callers to the '13' number given for free calls to obtain the booklet met with a blank: the staff taking their call had never heard of the booklet. □

Woodchip Propaganda For Tiny Tots?

The ABC's Independent Complaints Review Panel, a group of estimable citizens which is normally called upon to adjudicate on somewhat weightier matters, recently had to deal with alleged anti-woodchipping propaganda in the theme song for the children's television series, Blinky Bill.

This knotty problem (sorry!) arose when one Mr E F Herbert, chairman of the State Forests of NSW, complained that the song constituted 'dishonest propaganda' and 'subverted the minds' of kindergarten-age viewers.

BRIEFS

The ICRP did not uphold the complaint, stating that 'the song's evident bias and factual inaccuracies can be justified by the artistic licence permissible in children's fantasy programs'.

Nevertheless, the panel said it thought that in view of the possible conditioning effect of such programs on young minds, the ABC should think about developing some guidelines in this area. Managing Director David Hill thought it would be a good topic for discussion at the forthcoming World Summit on children and television in Melbourne (see Policy File, p. 36). □

Ain't It The Truth?

Possibly the most celebrated headline of recent years was that used by the Melbourne *Truth* on the death of former Liberal leader Billy Snedden, allegedly while engaged in an act of sexual congress with an unspecified woman: SNEDDEN DIES ON THE JOB. CU has it on excellent authority that the original head suggested by the sub, but rejected by the editor as 'too metaphysical', was SNEDDEN COMES AND GOES. □

They Said It.....

"I read the same story every Saturday under Errol Simper's by-line in *The Australian*..... I was relieved to see Errol is alive and well, because there was a rumour that he was long dead and the creative sub-editors of *The Australian* have been, with a pair of scissors and paste, putting the same story in the paper each Saturday." □

ABC Managing Director David Hill to the Senate Select Committee on ABC Management and Operations, 13/12/94.