

News

Mapping future directions for communications in rural Australia

The Communications Law Centre has been awarded a grant under the Australian Research Council Strategic Partnerships with Industry Research and Training Program (SPIRT). The two-year research project is entitled "Mapping Future Directions for Communications in Rural Australia".

One of the great challenges of Australian communications policy has been to ensure that people outside the major cities are not left behind by each new generation of technologies and services. Indeed, new communications technologies have often been sold to Australians largely on the promise of what they will do to conquer the distances experienced by people in rural areas.

SPIRT supports research projects which demonstrate a high level of collaboration between university researchers and eligible industry partners and the potential to develop new university-industry links or significantly enhance existing links.

The industry partners for this project are Optus Communications and the National Farmers Federation. The project, which will run into 1999, will explore a range of issues about communications in rural Australia. It provides an exciting opportunity for original, collaborative research bringing new perspectives to bear on complex and challenging policy questions.

The centre will shortly be seeking to employ a researcher for the first stage of the project. For further information, contact Jock Given at the centre's Sydney office.

www.comslaw.org.au

The Communications Law Centre's new Web Site is now up and running.

The site provides information about the centre and its publications as well as an index to articles in Communications Update since February 1996. Also, in the topic areas of interest to the centre, the site provides access to key

documents through information, articles and submissions written by CLC staff and consultants, and links.

The site, which is hosted by Foundation Law, was designed by Peter van Dyk, John Brisbin, Jennifer Eykamp and Greg McLachlan at Social Change On-Line. Lucy York, Antonia Norton and Therese Iverach carried out the work at the CLC end.

Freehills to support Communications Law Centre

The Communications Law Centre has a new major supporter. National law firm Freehill Hollingdale & Page is providing a solicitor on secondment to the centre's Sydney office for the first six months of 1998.

Jane Hogan, currently working in Freehills' Media Litigation section will begin work with the Centre on January 6. She will undertake research and policy development and manage the centre's legal practice while Lucy York is on maternity leave. The arrangement will provide significant support to the centre's activities and intensive policy experience for one of Freehills' practising lawyers.

The centre is grateful to Freehills for its support and looks forward to working with Jane.

US West bucks the convergence trend

The much touted trend of convergence between cable television and telecommunications industries is being bucked by US West which has just announced the splitting of its divisions into two separate companies.

A report in *Screen Digest* November 1997 states that US West's Media Group will be renamed MediaOne Group and will continue to handle cable television as well as assuming control of US West's 25.51 per cent stake in Time Warner Entertainment, the unit of Time Warner responsible for cable television and filmed entertainment. US West Communications Group will be renamed US West Inc and will handle telephone, data and wireless business operations.