



New faces in telecommunications

Greg Crew and Johanna Plante are the new faces of the Australian Communications Industry Forum (ACIF). Crew, newly appointed independent chair of ACIF, opened the Consumers' Telecommunications Network's Annual Forum on August 6th and used the occasion to announce the appointment of ACIF's first CEO, Johanna Plante.

Greg Crew

Crew began his career in telecommunications in 1955 as an engineer with what was then the PMG, moving from engineering into areas of marketing and management. He left Australia for Hong Kong in 1983, to become Managing Director of the Hong Kong telephone company and, at various times, also Hong Kong's international carrier. In 1993, he moved to England to become Chief Operating Officer of Mercury, and returned to Australia and various directorships in 1995. He was officially appointed ACIF's Independent Chair on July 23.

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Crew used his opening address to emphasise the benefits that competition can bring consumers and the responsibility the industry now has to make industry self regulation work.

In the more competitive environment, consumers will be better able to exercise their market power to obtain better services and prices, but it is a power they will need to learn to use effectively. The new environment also asks the more powerful industry players to refrain from exploiting their market power advantages in order to make industry self regulation work.

The new regime provides that, beyond the industry modes and codes of practice, there are regulators - the ACA and the ACCC, who can be the industry policemen if that is needed. But it will be up to the industry in the first instance to ensure that self regulation can work without constant reference to the regulators.

ACIF's role is to help industry provide the high quality services that users and consumers need. And to do that, it needs to help industry develop a vision for the future. The vision consumers have for the future of communications is a critical part of that industry vision. And Crew clearly invited consumers to participate in developing that vision of communications in the 21st century.

Johanna Plante

After Crew announced Johanna Plante as ACIF's new CEO, she spoke briefly, reflecting Crew's theme of the responsibility that self regulation places on industry and the role of ACIF in the new environment.

While Plante is new to ACIF, she is already a well known and respected name in Australian telecommunications. Like Crew, she first worked

with what was then Telecom, working in engineering and then marketing, strategic planning and business development. She also worked as a management consultant in the private sector. In 1989, she became one of the first three members of the newly created AUSTEL. She left AUSTEL for PacStar in 1994, and from there, moved briefly back to Telstra and on to Management consultants KPMG. She is also a member of the Board of the Regional Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund.

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Plante emphasised that it will be the industry itself that has to make self regulation work. ACIF's Board can be seen as the overseer of self regulation, and the industry members of ACIF's panels and committees who will be the 'factory' workers of self regulation. She cautioned there are still many who doubt whether self regulation can work and it will therefore be important that ACIF's output reflects the interests of all the industry stakeholders. That means everyone must contribute in the new regime if industry self regulation is to work.

A full report of the CTN conference will appear in the next edition of CU.

Holly Raiche