

News

Broadcast

OPTUS Communications has been selected by WIN Corporation to provide satellite distribution services for the delivery of the second commercial television network to regional Western Australia (WA).

The new television service, scheduled to begin operating in March 1999, will be delivered by the Aurora digital satellite system on the Optus B3 HotBird satellite. WIN Corporation was awarded the second regional television license in WA in April 1998.

The WIN signal will take in all of WA with the exception of metropolitan Perth. Under its license conditions, WIN must provide coverage to 60 per cent of the viewing population within 12 months, and must increase this coverage to 85 per cent within four years of commencing service.

Direct-to-home viewers in rural and remote WA will only receive the WIN service if they have an Optus compatible digital decoder.

RESEARCH group AC Nielsen Australia forecasts the switch from analog to digital terrestrial television could cost the Australian public and the free-to-air networks \$30 billion in the next decade. The research group says that the three commercial networks will initially spend up to \$800 million each to upgrade to digital. The upside is that television advertising revenues are expected by Nielsen to double to \$5 billion a year over the next 10 years.

NICKELODEON's Australian channel and commercial free-to-air operator Network 10 have pre-bought 13 half-hour episodes of local producer Barron Entertainment's children's program Driven Crazy. The series will air first on Network 10, probably before year-end. Nickelodeon Australia has also pre-bought 26 episodes of Village Roadshow Yoram Gross' animation series Old Tom which it plans to air in 2000.

THE Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) has recently released two handbooks: "Arts Radio - A Practical Handbook for Arts Participation in Community Radio" and "Outside Broadcasting - A Festivals Handbook". Both serve as comprehensive guides for radio station workers. They are suitable for the professional and the novice wanting to become involved in broadcasting and events. The aim of the handbooks is to provide a fresh guide to broadcasting events and artists with their works across the airwaves. Each is available from the CBAA on tel: (02) 9310 2999.

Online

INTERNET access by Australian households grew 14 per cent between February and May this year, according to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures.

At May 1998, more than 970,000 households had home Internet access. This represented 14 per cent of all households and 34 per cent of households with a computer. The bulk of the increase occurred in households which already had home computing facilities.

The ABS survey also found that 409,000 adults used the Internet for purchasing/ordering goods and services in the 12 months to May 1998, double that recorded for the year to February 1998. These adults undertook 1.1 million transactions (orders or purchases) for private use. Some 82 per cent of the purchases were made from home.

Telecommunications

THE Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) has released statistics showing a sharp increase in the proportion of complaints relating to delays in the connection of new telecommunications services.

Complaints about delays in new service connections accounted for more than 70 per cent of all provisioning complaints and 10.8 per cent of the TIO's total cases for the quarter ending June 30, 1998, up from 4.6 per cent for the previous quarter.

More than 60 per cent of complaints about provisioning came from New South Wales, tripling the number received in the state for the previous quarter. Complaints concerned delays in new connections, in-place connections, disconnections and enhanced services such as Call Waiting.

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has "declared" services supplied by Telstra using its Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), in effect requiring Telstra, the sole provider of ISDN, to supply it on terms that ultimately can

be arbitrated by the ACCC if parties cannot otherwise agree.

Declaration should give service providers better bargaining power in negotiations with Telstra over access to ISDN services, perhaps enabling them to supply competing ISDN and other data services such as frame relay to end-users.

The decision follows a public enquiry into competition in data markets during which the ACCC examined whether to declare ISDN services, along with proposed variations to the declarations for transmission capacity and digital data access services.

CONSUMERS who have not been able to stop their telephone number from being disclosed through Caller Number Display (CND) are entitled to compensation, according to the Australia Consumers' Association.

The association has warned consumers to check the status of their CND service. It has discovered that some telephone subscribers requested blocking of the CND service but subsequently found that the block remained unactivated.

CND can be blocked permanently or on a call-by-call basis. To check the status of the CND service, the association has advised consumers to call 127 220. To arrange a permanent block, call 1800 353 739. Complaints should be referred to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman.