

Upcoming conferences

October 1998

28-29: Conference Australia, 1998 E-business Symposium, Crown Towers, Melbourne. Speakers include Tim Pethick of Encyclopaedia Britannica International; Jo-anne Fisher, director of business services at the Australian Electronic Business Network; Greg Storey, head of VisaNet at Visa International; and David Jonas, managing director of ETC Electronic Trading Concepts. For details, tel (03) 9650 6655, fax (03) 9650 3535 or email emily@conaus.com.au

November 1998

4-5: IIR Conference, Third Generation Mobiles, Millennium Hotel, Sydney. Featuring international presentations from Torbjorn Nilsson, Ericsson, Sweden; Ukko Lappalainen, Nokia Communications, Finland; Charlotte Ramsteck, Lucent Technologies Network Systems, Germany; Mike Matthys, Unwired Planet, U.S.; and Joakim Nelson, Ericsson Mobile Communications, Business European Standards, Sweden. Contact IIR at tel (02) 9923 5090, fax (02) 9959 4684 or email info@iir.com.au

18-20: Convergence: Culture and Policy in the Digital Age, Brisbane. Speakers will discuss the realities

and implications of digital convergence in the cultural field. It is a conference about how to understand and engage with the convergence of technologies, communications systems and content, of broadcasting and collecting institutions, temporal and interactive media, practices and art forms, industry and culture and policy domains. For details, contact Karen Perkins, manager, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, tel (07) 3875 5350, fax (07) 3875 5511 or email K.Perkins@hum.gu.edu.au. or visit the conference website: http://www.gu.edu.au/akccmp/Convergence_conf.html

From The Archives

Remote Television Policy Review

THE Department of Communications has quietly commenced a review of its remote commercial TV policy and what possible changes "could and should be made".

The review comes less than six months after the northeast remote commercial TV services (RCTS) commenced broadcasts and only 10 months after the central service went to air on Aussat.

Departmental officers called the three RCTS licences - Imparja, Queensland Satellite TV and Golden West - to a meeting with Aussat on October 19.

They held a separate meeting with tribunal staff on the same day, and the state and territory governments were on their agenda for November 6.

The department appears to be in a hurry to complete the review and has asked RCTS licensees to make a formal input by the end of November.

A report is due in January 1989, then a short time for submissions, the release of draft options, and finally a report for the Minister in March.

Scope of the review

The review is addressing a range of highly sensitive policy issues:

the viability of RCTS given each licensee is receiving a government subsidy to pay for use of Aussat;

options to increase the number of TV services available to remote areas;

the need for the government-selected B-MAC system and encoding;

the means of equalising commercial TV services in South and West Australia; and

the problem of solus regional markets such as Mt Isa or Broken Hill and the lack of commercial TV in the remote southeast corner.

Clearly, the department has quietly embarked on a review which will trigger a shake-up in untouched regional markets and lead to further consolidation.

Licensee responses

The RCTS licensees have reacted to the impost of another review differently.

Golden West has been up and running for two years so Bill Rayner thinks it is quite a good idea.

Imparja's Dion Weston disagrees: "To put this new review on to Imparja at this time is a huge burden," says Weston.

"We still face enormous development challenges and the South Australian government has not yet clarified its position on funding."

Each licensee receives at least \$2 million a year from state or territory governments to pay for Aussat.

Imparja receives less than the others, partly because the South Australian government has not come to the party.

It is understood the Northern Territory has offered to match South Australia in topping up Imparja's budget to the level of other licensees. This would require South Australia to pay about \$300,000.

Communications Update, October 1988