

# News

## Telecommunications

TELSTRA and Optus have struck an agreement which provides local service resale to Optus. Optus will now resell Telstra local call services. Telstra is likely to offer similar wholesale local service deals to other carriers on a case-by-case negotiated basis. While details of the arrangement are confidential, it is known that Telstra used an internationally accepted avoidable cost methodology to arrive at the offer. The two telcos may negotiate in future to establish a basis for any further price reduction based on cost avoided by Telstra.

THE Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) has urged telephone users to make greater use of the Customer Services Guarantee (CSG) but only as an office of last resort, following the release of statistics collected by the TIO since the CSG's introduction on January 1, 1998. The TIO receives an average of 1,000 complaints a week regarding telephone services. Since January 1, calls about the CSG have numbered 50 a week, or five per cent of total complaints. Almost 75 per cent of CSG breaches are the result of

delays in fault repairs; the remainder are due to missed appointments and delays in supplying a service. Compensation amounts are determined by how long the phone companies exceed various time limits set by the CSG.

THE Australian Communications Industry Forum (ACIF) has become the first industry body to gain full accreditation from the Australian Standards Development Organisation. This means that ACIF will now be able to develop, approve and publish Australian Standards specifically for the communications industry, under its own authority. Accreditation has been granted for an initial three years.

## Online

MORE than a third of Australian small to medium enterprises believe they could use the Internet to sell their products and more than 100,000 businesses have set a 12 month timeframe for making a decision on implementing e-commerce, according to a survey released at the recent national e-commerce summit (**for full e-commerce conference report, turn to page 4**). The Yellow Pages Small

Business Index found almost universal awareness (95 per cent) of the Internet as a sales and marketing tool among businesses using computers. But the two major impediments identified by the businesses with e-commerce potential were cost (27 per cent) and their lack of expertise or technical knowledge (25 per cent). The survey found the use of computers was one of the key determining factors for small and medium businesses in relation to Internet use and perceptions of the potential for e-commerce use. In the past nine months, small business Internet connections have increased by 11 per cent with more than a third now connected to the Net. Two-thirds of medium businesses are connected to the Internet.

## Television

THE Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) has sought to remind viewers in remote and regional Western Australia that there is no guarantee that a Golden West Network analogue signal will continue after May 15, 1998. On that date, the ABA will review the permission it recently gave to Optus to retransmit the Golden West

Network television service SSW South and South West Western Australia outside its licence area. If the ABA revokes the permission, it will be a matter for negotiation between Golden West Network and Optus as to whether an analogue service continues. By May 15, the Golden West service WAW Remote Western Australia will have been digital for almost six months. This is deemed an adequate period for viewers who wish to receive the signal by satellite to purchase the necessary Scientific Atlanta set-top box. The federal government has offered to provide \$750 to individuals toward the cost of purchasing new equipment.

## Radio

A SECOND commercial radio licence has been allocated to Tablelands Broadcasting by the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA). This is the fiftieth commercial radio licence allocated by the ABA to a regional operator providing the only commercial service in a market. The new service, 4AMM, will cover the same area as the existing AM service in Atherton, Queensland, and will broadcast on FM 97.9 Mhz.