
Regulatory issues

ACCC regulators conference

On 18–19 November 1999 the Commission will host a regulators conference in Sydney.

The conference will focus on regulatory issues in the telecommunications, energy and transport sectors. It is aimed at a wide audience including those in government, industry, legal, academic and consumer areas. Speakers at the conference will include international and domestic experts.

More information is available from Jacqueline Pearce on telephone (02) 6243 1113 or e-mail at jacqueline.pearce@acc.gov.au

Telecommunications

Competition notice guidelines issued

On 5 August 1999 the Commission issued new guidelines that it must follow when deciding whether to issue a competition notice in response to anti-competitive conduct within the telecommunications industry. They replace the previous competition notice guidelines issued in mid-1997.

The Commission has also issued an information paper on anti-competitive conduct in the telecommunications industry which outlines the approach it will usually take when investigating anti-competitive conduct. It updates the information paper released in mid-1997.

The guidelines and the information paper take into account the recent amendments to the competition notice regime which give the Commission greater flexibility in responding to anti-competitive conduct in the telecommunications industry.

They are available on the Commission's website in the Telecommunications Section under Competition and enforcement (<http://www.acc.gov.au/contact/fs-telecom.htm>).

Declaration of local call and local interconnection services

On 22 July 1999 the Commission announced it would declare local call and local interconnection services, effectively mandating access to Telstra's local network. This decision will allow competitors direct access to Telstra's copper lines that connect customers to local telephone exchanges.

It will also enable competitors to directly access carriers' local exchanges and will guarantee the availability of wholesale (resale) local call services to other carriers. This should encourage lower prices for local and long-distance services and enable Telstra's competitors to provide these services to customers on a single bill.

The Commission expects that the decision will also affect the provision of high speed services. The past few years has seen the emergence of digital subscriber line (DSL) technology which allows the delivery of high speed services over copper as well as other delivery mechanisms such as broadband networks and satellite. Competitors will still need to invest in new network facilities and technologies. However, they will be able to use Telstra's existing copper customer-access lines rather than having to roll out their own cables to compete for local and new advanced services.

The final report detailing the reasons for the Commission's decision is available on the Commission's website under Telecommunications, Access pricing papers (<http://www.acc.gov.au/contact/fs-telecom.htm>).