Experts, Experts Everywhere

Confused about proposals for expert groups and task forces that have been announced recently?
Bodies which seem to be likely to cover a lot of the same ground?
You are not alone. As a service to its readers, CU prints below the terms of reference for each of these bodies.

Optical Fibre Expert Group

Composition not yet announced (mid-Sept) but rumours include former Industry Minister John Button as chair. Government has allocated $1m in 1993-94 for Expert Group (probably 12 people) to examine preconditions for the technical, economic and commercial viability of wide-spread broadband optical fibre services to houses, businesses and schools. (No mention of social/cultural issues). DTC and DITARD to provide secretariat staff.

Terms of Reference

The inquiry will examine the preconditions for technical, economic and commercial viability of the widespread delivery of broadband services on a commercial basis by optical fibre to houses, business and schools in Australia, having regard to matters such as:

• what broadband services are currently in use in Australia and what is the likely potential for other specific broadband services;

• the capacity of potential users to exploit the range of broadband services available or likely to be available;

• the relative costs/benefits of delivery of these broadband services by optic fibre compared to other means, drawing on local and overseas experience;

• the industry development opportunities that such an expansion of services will offer Australian industry and the degree to which industry will be able to take advantage of the opportunities; and

• whether there are different priorities and timing for delivery of broadband services between various sectors of the community.

The inquiry will also identify the research and development effort required, the educational and promotional requirements for economic use of the proposed services options, the funding mechanisms for investment in such services, options for co-operation among relevant interest groups and an appropriate role for Government within the context of existing telecommunications policy.

Communications Futures Project

The nature of this BTCE project is outlined in Terry Flew's story (see pp.8-9). Steering Committee for the project is Maurice Haddad (BTCE), Mike Hutchinson (DTC) and Fred Brenchley (freelance commentator). The work of the project will provide 'useful input' into the work of the Expert Group, and detailed arrangements for their inter-relationship will be developed after membership of the Expert Group is announced.

The particular objectives of the Project are:
(a) to upgrade understanding of future economic, technical, commercial, regulatory and policy implications of emerging information and communications services and technologies, and of the linkages and dynamic interactions between these;
(b) to stimulate and inform public and parliamentary debate;
(c) to develop a market informed understanding of the factors influencing the decisions of market participants, in particular:
  (i) the likely underlying cost and demand forces driving market structure and investor behaviour towards key technologies; and
  (ii) the way in which strategic corporate considerations and policy factors are likely to modify those underlying market imperatives;
(d) to identify key issues for government and industry arising from the emergence of new information and communications services and technologies;
(e) to contribute to the development of policy frameworks within which these issues might be addressed.

Terms of Reference

The CFP Team will examine and report on:
1. likely developments over the next decade and beyond in information, entertainment and communications services and technologies;
2. implications of these developments for market participants in those industries, including;
  (a) the underlying economic factors influencing industry growth and change;
  (b) emerging patterns of commercial relationships within and between traditional industries; and
3. implications of these developments for policy and regulation over the coming decade. ❏