



EU privacy directive goes ahead

The European Union's Council of Ministers has at last adopted a 'common position' on the proposed Data Protection Directive, opening the way for Europe-wide privacy laws. The Council finally adopted a common position on February 20 1995, with the UK abstaining. The draft Directive will now go to the European Parliament for a second reading and should return to the Council for formal adoption by mid-year, with final adoption expected by year's end. Member states of the EU will then be allowed two years to amend their laws to conform with the Directive.

The draft Directive was adopted just days before the G7 Summit of leading industrialised nations and, according to a press release from the Commission of the EU, 'gives a signal to the EU's trading partners, such as Canada, Japan and the US, of the importance the EU gives to the protection of the individual's rights in the application of new technological developments'.

Some key elements of the amended draft Directive are: it covers computerised data and manual data (but with a 12 year phase-in) and transmission of information 'whatever the technology'; it covers the public, private and non-profit sectors; it imposes much stricter requirements for the processing of 'sensitive' data (including data concerning ethnic or racial origin, political or religious beliefs, trade union membership, health or sexual activities); it requires personal data to be relevant, accurate and up-to-date (but only when used); and it requires processing of personal data to be notified to the supervisory authority in each member State. Where there

are still some differences between the laws of member States, the law of the State where the data processing is 'established' will prevail.

The export of personal data to non-EU countries will be prohibited except to countries which provide an 'adequate level of protection', and the Council of Ministers will decide which countries meet this standard. □

*Privacy - Law & Policy Reporter,
Volume 2 No 4, 1995*

Homeshopping with Dr John

Former Opposition leader, Dr John Hewson has jumped out of the frying pan and into the fiery Asian homeshopping market. With a 15 per cent stake in a Singapore-based operation called AsiaShop, Dr Hewson and the other backers of the project - the Australian-owned International Media Management (IMM) and Prudential Asset Management Asia - are planning to spread the idea of sofa shopping across Asia. The concept is to offer payTV subscribers a range of products and services such as travel arrangements, insurance, and financial advice as well as a wide-range of consumer goods. Until the system becomes fully interactive in four to five years, purchasers will phone through their credit card details.

AsiaShop has a memorandum of understanding with Singapore's second largest retailer, Singapore Technologies Group, to develop home shopping. □

crossed lines

economic myths & social realities in telecommunications

A conference organised by the Consumers' Telecommunications Network

Tuesday 8 August 1995

9.00am - 5.00pm
MSB Conference Centre
Level 5
207 Ken Street
Sydney NSW 2000
(wheelchair accessible)

The 1995 conference of the Consumers' Telecommunications Network (CTN) will focus on the Government's proposed deregulation of the telecommunications industry post-1997.

- The myths of competition policy and the need for consumer protection
- Whether price reductions are benefiting residential consumers
- How to improve community access to broadband services
- Public involvement and consultation in policy making.

The conference will be opened by Hon Jeanette McHugh, the Minister for Consumer Affairs.

\$150 Full registration
(includes proceedings)
\$60 Concession
(includes proceedings)
\$40 Concession

All prices include lunch and teas

For more information contact: Ian Wilson, CTN, tel (02) 318 2026