



# The Network: Where Will It All End?

## Where does a carrier's network end?

This issue is likely to become increasingly important as competition between carriers heats up, and as various interests jockey for control of multimedia access to business and domestic premises.

Currently, the carriers have the exclusive right to install telecommunications facilities up to the Network Termination Point (NTP): the first telephone wall socket for single line premises (most residences) or to the main distribution frame for multi-line installations.

Two years ago, the Government announced that the NTP would be moved to the property boundary in 1993, though the Minister asked AUSTEL to report on the implications of such a move before the change is made (see *CU* 84).

## The AUSTEL Line

AUSTEL has just released its Draft Report to the Minister. Among its recommendations is one suggesting that the NTP be moved to the *building* boundary, rather than the property boundary as originally proposed by Government.

This recommendation is at odds with submissions to the AUSTEL inquiry by consumer organisations, which highlighted the difficulty of moving the NTP away from the first wall socket. As a condition of their licence, carriers are currently required to discover and repair faults, at no cost to customers, in the service they provide. While the NTP remains at the wall socket, customers can be assured that carrier service will be maintained. But if the NTP is moved away from the socket, carrier responsibility will extend only to the point where their service ends, leaving the distance between the NTP and wall socket uncovered by carrier service fault repair.

AUSTEL has recognised these difficulties and has recommended that Telecom's universal service obligation to provide 'end to end' service should continue. Customers would have the choice, however, of having Telecom provide service or facilities only up to the building line, with a third party providing the additional service.

While this recommendation may go some way towards meeting consumer concerns, potential problems remain. For example: if a landlord (such as a state Housing Commission)

chooses to have a third party provide cabling and facilities beyond the building entry point, the tenant or subsequent owner will need to know of previous arrangements, and may have to bear the cost of repairs and maintenance between the building entry point and the wall socket.

AUSTEL held public meetings in Sydney and Melbourne in early August to discuss a range of issues arising from its Draft Report and will be making a final report to the Minister soon. □

Holly Raiche

## Letter to the Editor

4 August 1993

Dear Gil,

I am writing to correct two statements concerning the ACTF made in the article 'New Kids' Media Body' in the July edition of *Communications Update*.

The first is that there is no existing agency including the ACTF which has an educational, training, research and advocacy role for children's media. In fact, the ACTF was established in 1982 with a comprehensive brief from the Australian Education Council and Government to be a centre for all aspects of children's media. Although it is our success as a producer of quality films for which we are most widely known, over the past 11 years the ACTF has successfully undertaken activities in all aspects of children's media. For instance, we have undertaken a pioneering role in expanding the use of television in education; advocated children's television interests to government bodies and the community; run training workshops and given talks to more than 120 educational and community groups throughout Australia over the past two years alone; and provided information to an average 800 people per year from our specialist library.

Secondly, the Foundation does not have "a virtual monopoly on production in the children's film and television area". Since the Australian children's drama quota was introduced in 1984, the commercial networks have been required to screen a combined total of 312 hours of first-release Australian children's drama, of which only 32.5 hours (or 10%) have been produced by the ACTF. And while the last two ACTF productions have been sold to the ABC, the ABC has recently purchased series from three other producers besides the ACTF.

As well as producing our own programs we invest script development and production investment funds in independent producers' children's projects. In the past 12 months we have assisted projects in three states by these ways. It is an important part of our role to encourage other independent producers to produce quality programs for children.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr) Patricia Edgar, Director

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