



Seniors into Mobiles

The idea prevalent among the computer-literate young that anyone over 50 is resistant to newfangled technology has been dealt a blow by recent Telecom research into mobile phone usage.

The research shows strong growth in the use of mobile phones by people in the 55 plus age group and significantly, in the over 70 group.

A spokesman for Telecom Mobilenet said that no detailed research had been done to establish reasons for this trend, but it was likely that it reflected concern about personal safety, and also the convenience of being able to maintain constant contact with relatives and friends.

People over 55 account for about seven per cent of all mobile phone users, with just under two per cent in the 60-64 bracket and around one per cent among the over 70s. While these figures may not seem great, the spokesman pointed out that a few years ago, the entire market was made up by business users, and the steady growth in the older market was 'very significant'. Currently this market represents around 13,500 phones nationally.

Another factor was widespread national coverage: Telecom's Mobilenet reaches 84 per cent of Australia's population. □

MOBILE PHONE



Asian TV Business Booming

Hard on the heels of the successful free-to-air Star TV operations (see *CU 86*), giant US pay TV operator Home Box Office is planning to expand its Asian operations into the Philippines, Hong Kong and Taiwan by the end of this year.

HBO already operates in Singapore and Thailand. It is currently considering the possibility of funding locally-produced programming and having subtitling in six Asian languages - an acknowledgment that, as Sky TV's experience shows - people are not keen on being bombarded with material in languages other than their own. □

Who is David Beddall?

The new Minister for Communications David Beddall was the Minister for Small Business, Construction and Customs in the first Keating Ministry.

The exact nature of the relationship and division of responsibilities between Beddall and the Minister for Transport and Communications Bob Collins is not yet clear, but it appears that Collins will concentrate on transport and will continue to handle pay TV. The rest of the communications portfolio will be left to Beddall, apparently on the assumption this area is not likely to encounter major problems in the immediate future. (What about phone pre-selection?)

Beddall was elected to the House of Representatives as Member for Fadden (QLD) in 1983. Following a redistribution in 1984, he was elected as the first MHR for the seat of Rankin (QLD) and was re-elected in 1987 and in 1990. He was appointed Minister for Small Business and Customs in April 1990 and Ministerial responsibility for construction was given to him in December 1991.

Before entering Parliament Beddall was a self-employed commercial financial consultant specialising in financing of equipment and purchases for small to medium sized business with an emphasis on leasing, hire purchase and equity financing.

In 1990, Beddall chaired the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry Science and Technology Report on Small Business. The Beddall inquiry was the first Parliamentary inquiry into all aspects of small business in Australia and spent two years canvassing small business views all around Australia.

Beddall believes that small business underpins the whole national economy. Small enterprises constitute a vital part of the manufacturing and agricultural industries and can make an important contribution to the export performance of those sectors.

In his previous portfolio, Beddall stressed the positive and pervasive influence of the customs component, saying that customs is not simply about barrier controls and tariffs, it is an important component in the management of the economy with a creative role to play in enhancing industry performance.

Beddall has occupied a variety of Party and other positions since entering Federal Parliament, including Chairman of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology, and a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence.

He has been a member and secretary of the ALP Caucus Industry Committee, a member of the Caucus Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence Committee, Chairman of the Caucus Primary Industry and Resources Committee and also Chairman of the Prime Minister's Country Task Force.

Beddall immigrated to Australia in 1954 from the United Kingdom and is a naturalised Australian. □