

**OPEL CLAIM**

Coonan says trials have vindicated her 20km Wi-Max coverage claims

**ELECTION**

Coonan says shadow minister Conroy plain wrong on VoIP claims

**IPV6**

Blue Coat says Australia needs to get pro-active on harnessing IPv6

# COMMUNICATIONS DAY

WEDNESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2007

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## EXCLUSIVE: Coonan eyes regulatory reform if re-elected, says ALP alternative too “simplistic”

In what may be her last major interview in the term of the current government, Communications Minister Helen Coonan has given her most revealing take yet on the challenges she has faced in the ministerial chair.

In a extensive interview conducted in Sydney with Communications Day chief editor Tim Marshall, Coonan says her government’s regulatory regime over Telstra was the best available option given the “scrambled egg” she inherited but also flags extensive regulatory reforms designed to give longer-term price certainty if she is re-elected.

She also dismisses suggestions that her Broadband Connect policies were a reaction to Labor’s FTTN plans and says Labor’s policy solutions for the sector are excessively simplistic.

**Tim Marshall: Minister, your portfolio has been elevated to main-stream news status since you took over in mid-2004. Broadband is a major player in the election campaign. How have you enjoyed the ride?**

Helen Coonan: The rise of interest has been great because it gives you the opportunity to debate something that is enabling. The thing I like about the portfolio is that no one really has given you a script. It’s all out there and no one really knows precisely where it’s going to go. I’ve found it fascinating to be in the position to be able to develop some of the themes and issues that are really going to impact our future, not only from the point of the economy but the social glue of how we are all held together.



**It’s fair to say you’ve faced some heat in your time as minister. Do you think if you had your time again you’d do anything differently?**

It would be very difficult to see what you would do differently in the deck of cards and they way they are dealt to you. I didn’t have a blank piece of paper and I started with a scrambled egg and I think its very important that you try and make sure you behave in an even handed way to the industry and you focus on all the important things like competition, targeted investment and strong consumer framework otherwise you are not going to get an outcome and you don’t get knocked off your course by all the things that industry claims that are going to come up.

**A fair portion of the scramble was made under the Coalition’s watch. Are you saying there were failures?**

I don’t think that’s a fair comment. The eggs started to get scrambled with Labor and the corporatisation of Telstra and it got compounded. There is a long history of not confronting it but once you’ve started to have investment and you are in a process of privatisation you really couldn’t seri-

**COMMSDAY LIVE  
ELECTION 2007**

# THE POST-POLL TELECOM AGENDA

L'AQUA, COCKLE BAY WHARF, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA  
MONDAY DEC 3 2007 9AM-5PM

The next Australian parliamentary term will likely see a new minister and radical changes to telecom policy. Big questions that will influence the future of the telecom sector for over a decade will be determined by the next government. What price for a fibre to the node network? Will we get fibre to the home? How will Opel's deployment affect the economics of backhaul and broadband? Will Telstra succeed in its campaign for relaxed regulations?

Find out what the industry thinks as we assemble a top line-up of carrier chiefs, lobbyists, analysts, regulatory specialists and technologists to discuss the impact of the new government - whoever it might be - on the telecom sector.

Supported by



**9-10.30am Capital & Labour**

- Telstra public policy managing director Dr Phil Burgess
- Communications, Electrical & Plumbing Union senior national industrial research officer Ros Eason

**11am-12.30pm Operator crystal balls**

- Optus director corporate and regulatory Paul Fletcher
- Internode carrier relations manager John Lindsay
- Telstra regulatory director Dr Tony Warren

**1.30pm-3pm The great broadband policy push**

- Nextgen strategic manager Michael Ackland
- Pipe Networks co-founder Stephen Baxter
- Market Clarity CEO Shara Evans

**3.30pm-5pm Getting the policy & processes right**

- Communications Alliance CEO Anne Hurley
- Institute of Public Affairs research fellow Chris Berg
- Havyatt Associates' David Havyatt



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from 9am-5pm Monday 3 December 2007 at L'Aqua, Cockle Bay Wharf, Sydney**

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ously pull the rug out and start again. You had an entity that was government owned, it was a difficult set of circumstances.

**One of the big regrets expressed by industry was that the Coalition didn't push for the structural separation of Telstra before T3. Do you share that regret?**

That's the whole argument about the scrambled egg and the investment was made. It would have invited a fairly significant court action from the bond holders in the US I would have thought. You have to do the best with what you have got and I think we'll end up with a telecommunications landscape that will have addressed by a side-wind the issues of competition in rural and regional Australia and the Expert Taskforce if it is around the go ahead, really should have got its head around how to provide an incentive investment that will give a proper return.

**Separate to the Expert Taskforce and Opel, what kind of things are you considering to improve the industry should you retain government? Surely the regulation is a problem?**

I have in mind locking in, if we are returned, instead of this endless circuit of what you do with access prices, we should confront that and lock it in over the life of the investment so that you get certainty and get it with legislation. You don't have a two year delay while everybody appeals and carries on in the usual way.

I am making no criticism of the ACCC in any way but simply the process is not conducive of a timeframe that is anywhere close to acceptable to my way of thinking. If you don't want to even start until 2010, that is about the right way to go to drive it back into the ACCC to set the prices.

We will also look at the reasonable things about overbuild and those sorts of things. You have to recognise that in an area like telecommunications, competition doesn't lift all boats. You have a disconnect if you haven't got an incentive for investors up one end and a disconnect if people are just not getting services at another end. You've got to make sense of all of that without driving people off the field and not providing the most level playing field you can. Its pretty hard but that's what you have to do.

**Some of your arguments about the ACCC being complex and time consuming support the views of Telstra. As a Liberal minister in a reforming government, do you ever feel uncomfortable arguing the corner for regulation against capital owners?**

You start off as a minister in my government wanting as light touch regulation as you can. But once again you inherit, as I have inherited, a specific communications regime that is predicated on the basis that it will be looked at when competition is robust enough to withstand withdrawing it or taking it back.

We're not there yet but I'm quite certain there will be a case where there is a case for taking a very good look at the telco specific parts of the Act with a view to lightening the regulation.

I think we should roll back the accounting separation because I think it is redundant. I'd like to see how well operational separation works before we do anything about that. Carrier conditions are absolutely critical, witness the CDMA switch-off. If you don't have any and it's a totally deregulated environment you'd go back to one provider because of Telstra's market share. You can't have it both ways. You can't have no separation of the network and the services in effect and at the same time not have any regulation.

If you restructure the industry, there may be a case for a different way of regulating.



**Telco and media is becoming so complex, it would seem more difficult to make policy for. There are no clear rights or wrongs just imperfect and constantly changing choices. How do you deal with that?**

The basic thing is I don't make assumptions that there are right answers. You have to make an assessment of all the possibilities and then against some clear criteria and objectives you have to try and get the best outcome. That's what I do.

In media for instance I said we needed a transition to release the old settings because they no longer worked and redundant – seriously they were set before the internet – but not so much so that you remove all of it because you don't want to risk consumers not being able to view free-to-air TV and all those things.

### **One claim that has been made is that the government only acted on broadband after Labor proposed its FTTN. What do you say to that?**

If anyone seriously thinks I could have come up with this Opel Network just a response to something Labor was doing, they are just wrong. It was in the pipeline months before, in fact eight months beforehand.

I recognised as soon as I got in the portfolio that broadband should be treated it as a great enabler. So I have been criss-crossing the country putting in not only the infrastructure and thinking of a way to fill in the blackspots, but also to look at how to kick it in the guts and give it a really good profile for delivering health and education and all the things I have done.

Labor has been allowed to present something that is so simplistic and unachievable I think it's amazing. People are just starting to realise this is pie in the sky. For \$8 billion you are just not going to be able to do it.

### **What worries you most about Labor's proposal?**

I'm most concerned about the \$2 billion Communications Fund that I fought tooth and nail to get locked in as a perpetual fund to support remote and regional services. It is just reckless to suggest abolishing that fund and rolling it into a fibre optic network that can't possibly deliver on Labor's promises. There is no way there will be a return on a regional network that no one wants to build anyway to support upgrades and blackspot rollouts.

### **Your Opel plan has been criticised on technical grounds. What is your response to that criticism?**

It's very technical stuff as we all know. Nobody has yet really pulled me up on any serious flaw on what I say the technology is. That is largely because I don't make it up, I actually check very carefully. There might be differences of opinion with experts but it won't be that I have said something out of the blue without having something to underpin it.

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## **What about the lack of information available on the selection of Opel, what it plans to deploy and the benchmarks it has to meet? Shouldn't that be public?**

That might be something we would do as a re-elected government. You might take a look at what could be made public and what was subject of commercial in confidence. We would take a good look at what could be made available. I would certainly be disposed of looking at making as much as possible available that was consistent with not having problems with commercial in confidence considerations.

## **Some commentators see WiMax losing momentum as the cellular HSPA market increases the scale of its ecosystem and rate of global deployment. Is that a concern that you have picked the wrong technology here?**

We didn't pick the technology and I wouldn't try. You need a mix, this contract has a mix of technologies. The other important thing about WiMax standard is the potential for interoperability, the fact that it is open source and the fact that there are a lot of big backers meaning costs will come down. It does not seem to have the things that can be said about the whole HSDPA world, which is a big industry.

I think it will simply transform the way competition works in rural and regional Australia. Otherwise we would have been locked into some very specific and unrewarding arguments about other sorts of operational separation.

## **Labor has positioned broadband as a key election issue and woven it into several major policy announcements. How is it viewed by the Coalition machine?**

We see it as important but I would say myself that broadband is not a front line election issue but what it does is. People don't think about what network or speed they have but they know what they do and what they enjoy. It's an enabling thing.

Tim Marshall

## **Coonan says Opel coverage tested and proven**

Optus has refused to address claims that its Opel Networks WiMax test exercises are interfering with existing networks, despite confirmation that it is set to open three trial sites for public scrutiny and has already completed coverage audits.

Communications minister Helen Coonan yesterday confirmed that Opel had completed geospatial research on its proposed wireless network. She said the studies confirmed her earlier claims of a 20km reach, after interaction with topography. "We've done all the testing and all the geospatial testing and there doesn't seem to really be any problem in terms of getting the distance and the coverage," she said.

An Optus spokesperson last night refused to provide details on the WiMax trials. Coonan said customers were connected to the networks and a switch-on would be announced within days. She said Opel was yet to settle on a vendor for the WiMax component of its project. It is understood however that Kordia has been appointed deployment partner while Alvarion is running at least one of the test sites.

Coonan would not comment on Opel's spectrum problems, which have seen it explore options to lease or acquire new rights after problems were identified with its initial plan using 5.8GHz spectrum. She said it was unlikely that the Australian Communications and Media Authority would deal outside protocol to reassign Australian Defence Force 3.4GHz spectrum to Opel. "That's been a departmental thing," she said.

According to CommsDay sources however, wireless broadband operators have experienced interference in areas where Opel is testing in the 3.4-3.5GHz spectrum range in Western Australia, South Australia and the Hunter Valley in NSW. The source said Optus had pulled down a veil of secrecy over the test exercises.

In addition to spectrum confusion, Opel's trials are progressing without the company attaining a carrier license. Coonan confirmed yesterday the trial sites were assigned to Optus and Elders li-

censes and that tests would have no bearing on the structurally separated ambition for the final entity. Opel is believed to have applied to ACMA for its own permit.

Coonan said yesterday, “we have the testing underway, we have the customer trials going and we do think we will soon be able to give the final examinations of all the test sites. There are three big test sites in South Australia, Western Australia and the Hunter Valley. We have over 80 staff working full time on the venture. They are very close to completing the upgrade of the fibre backbone that will support the Opel network.”

The minister indicated that extensive testing has already taken place on the Opel sites before they are opened for scrutiny. “They have to trial some of the equipment first and then it gets tested by the Enex Test Lab. Enex has tested it all and verified that they can get the coverage, reach and other qualities contended for. My understanding is that it is like commissioning any equipment, you’ve got to do some trials and tests and make sure you have the accepted performance,” Coonan said.

Coonan also confirmed that Opel has selected its ADSL2+ DSLAM vendor. CommsDay reported last month that Nortel, Ericsson and Huawei Technologies were short-listed for a Optus supply deal including the 426 DSLAM commitment. Optus would not confirm the deal last night.

CommsDay understands that Opel faces a major milestone in mid-December relating to equipment selection, demonstration and deployment. Sources say breaching the condition could result in the whole venture being dissolved. Coonan refused to provide details yesterday but said milestones should be made public following the election.

“There are several benchmarks in the agreement and we have been very careful on behalf of the taxpayer that you wouldn’t buy a pig in a poke and if there were any issue – we don’t anticipate any – well, obviously there would be consequences under the agreement,” Coonan said.

Tim Marshall

## **Conroy off the mark on WiMax VoIP, says Coonan**

Communications minister Helen Coonan has produced vendor referrals she says dispel Labor claims that VoIP services won’t work over WiMax.

Shadow communications minister Stephen Conroy said last week that the Opel Networks WiMax service would fail to meet the needs of small business, which are rapidly embracing VoIP as a cheap and flexible telephony alternative.

While avoiding the question in a televised debate on Friday, Coonan said yesterday that vendors supported the capacity of WiMax to support VoIP services. She provided a statement signed by Samsung engineer Yun Hee Lee stating, “VoIP is a current feature of the Samsung WiMax 802.16e network equipment.” She said that Airspan networks confirmed its function on the 802.16d standard.

“It’s very interesting because he tried to suggest you can’t make VoIP calls on WiMax. We now know have vendors saying that it is possible,” Coonan said. “It just shows that the bloke doesn’t have a clue what he is talking about. I don’t suppose he thought of it himself but he really should check that stuff.”

Tim Marshall

## **Telstra testing Arbor hacking protection platform**

Telstra is deploying a new Arbor Networks security platform to protect its enterprise customers against a rising tide of hacking.

CommsDay understands that a trial of Arbor’s PeakFlow SP platform is underway. Telstra ran a competitive tender for hacking solutions after major enterprise customers raised concerns, sources said. Arbor has four resellers in Australia: Sanvu, O2 Networks, Fastwire and S Central. It is believed S Central won the Telstra tender.

A Telstra spokesman would not confirm the trial but indicated efforts were ongoing to improve security for its business customers. The solution is hoped to improve security, both on Telstra’s network and within the internal operations of its major customers.

Arbor Networks has recently scaled up marketing in the Australian market. Local boss Nick Race recently confirmed the company was “in talks” with local service providers. It is pushing its PeakFlow SP solution, which is claimed to be in use by 70% of service providers globally. The

product allows multiple levels of threat protection and alert.

According to Telstra spokesman Brent Hooley, "Telstra is always looking to improve security for our business customers and enhance their experience using our Next IP and Next G networks."

Tim Marshall

## **Government should lead on IPv6, not "wait and see"**

Web communications company Blue Coat has lamented the Australian government's "wait and see" approach to IPv6, the emerging new internet protocol which is expected to revolutionise mobility and ease of use in system networking. The current standard, IPv4, makes portability of IP addresses difficult and is expected to be eclipsed by IPv6 as enterprises see the advantages of the new system.

Blue Coat Asia-Pacific product marketing manager Leigh Costin said the Australian government could be more pro-active in the promotion of IPv6. "It's a shame really since we have a greater capacity to do an IPv6 rollout, because we've done it so often before... it's kind of a shame we're not taking more of a leadership role in this." Costin told CommsDay that as Australia's trading partners begin to transfer technology to work with the new protocol, the government will have to adapt to keep up. "We'll have no choice," he said.

"In many ways it's a "wait and see" type of thing," said Costin. "It is also tied in with our trading partners... when Taiwan starts demanding that IPv6 implementation start happening, mainland [China] will have no choice but to follow on." He claims Australia will follow "when trading partners start pushing in a meaningful way," but said. "I don't see yet a major push in the government to be a leader in this."

"The US government in particular has taken quite a strong stand on this... they're going to be mandated across in IPv6 format. To be a partner of the US you'll have to do that, that'll push things along quite smartly," said Costin.

He claims IPv4 is "not maintainable, because everywhere you go you're something different." Current IP addresses must be adapted to moving computers or devices, while IPv6 will give a fixed address to devices. "You'll carry that personality wherever you go.... mobile portability issues go away," he said. "This is the ultimate convergence."

Blue Coat says that the new IPv6 will provide "quite a marketplace for transitional devices," as companies discover the advantages of the new technology. "There's a need for a really practical way of managing your IPv4 space and IPv6 space without detrimental action on both sides," said Costin.

"Global corporations see the pains of complexity... for them there's a degree of utility they get out of IPv6 that would make their lives a lot easier," said Blue Coat senior architect Qing Li. Li says that although IPv6 will give security advantages, enterprises must ensure they understand the need to build a robust security framework around any system using IPv6. Li spoke at yesterday's Australian IPv6 Summit in Canberra, and is co-author of a two-volume reference series on IPv6.

Luke Coleman

## **Vodafone claims first in on shared business caps**

Vodafone has claimed that 3 Mobile's release of shared business cap plans shows the company playing "catch up." Vodafone yesterday claimed it had beaten 3 Mobile to the shared cap release, having offered them for two years.

"For two years, Vodafone was the first and only Australian mobile carrier to provide business customers with a shared plan that provides multiple users with a pool of talk-time that is several times the value of customers' actual monthly spend," Vodafone claimed yesterday.

"Vodafone is original and, while our competitors play 'catch-up', we're already working on our next major offer or service strategy that will ensure Vodafone continues to lead the way," Vodafone product manager Tim Cowan said.

Optus also said it has been offering a similar product since 2005. A spokesperson said "our Small Medium Business group has been offering shared capped plans since 2005. We launched yes Business Smart Plan for five to twenty users in July 2006 and yes Business Mobile Fleet Plans were launch in August 2005 for three to fifty users.

Luke Coleman

## Cisco launches virtual switching system at 1.44 Tbps

Cisco yesterday launched a series of new products which it claims will massively reduce switching complexity and allow businesses to more readily embrace collaborative ICT applications. The company yesterday announced the release of the Catalyst 6500 virtual switching system 1440, the Catalyst 4500 E-Series, and enhancements to its integrated services router product.

“We’re seeing what we believe is now a cultural revolution,” said Cisco advanced technologies and systems engineering director Kevin Bloch, referring to collaborative and interactive business applications. “That’s the driver, this is now becoming a real multimedia environment.”

Bloch says that switching virtualisation is “fundamental to what we’re announcing today... it brings down costs because you virtualise physical fabric... it’s going to transform, from an engineering point of view, how you design networks.”

“We’re talking about a new concept called the virtual switching system 1440... it’s absolutely brand new, it’s transformational, it’s a category killer in the high-end switching market,” said Bloch.

Cisco claims the 6500 VSS1440 effectively combines multiple switches into one, scaling bandwidth capacity to as much as 1.44 Terabits per second. It allows two 6500 switches to act like a single virtual switch, and simplifies network management by offering a single point of configuration of the VSS domain. The device also allows the use of Cisco ‘smart call home’ service, giving real-time monitoring and trouble shooting from Cisco’s technical assistance centre.

Bloch said the product was aimed at enterprise-for-branch clients, but said the lines between enterprises and SMBs were blurring. “What is a branch nowadays? It looks like a mid-sized business,” he said. “I believe in the next five to ten years the delineation between enterprises and small business will become blurry... it’s more of a function of what that business is trying to do, than whether they’ve got 200 employees or two thousand... the actual needs are blurring.”

The Catalyst 4500 E-Series product claims to deliver 320 gigabits per second speeds, a fourfold increase in per-slot bandwidth, and was designed with investment protection as a high priority. Bloch said the company has done testing with Intel for its systems to integrate with developing technologies such as Wi-Fi 802.11n draft 2, and will also support emerging networking standard IPv6 with its CentreFlex technology.

Luke Coleman

## Councils awarded for recycling mobiles

Councils will be given awards for supporting the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association mobile phone recycling program, MobileMuster. The awards, to be held this month in Darwin, will recognize councils who have provided “outstanding efforts” in the program, with over 220 councils working with to recycle phones.

“By promoting mobile phone recycling, local councils are playing a critical role in recovering essential metals and plastics for reuse, preventing potentially harmful substances ending up in landfill and reducing society’s demand on our precious natural resources,” said Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association CEO Chris Althaus.

Four awards will be given out at the ceremony, including the ‘National Excellence Award’ for the local council that has proactively promoted and creatively engaged their community in mobile phone recycling as well as actively collecting mobile phones.

Internationally renowned jeweller Nic Cerrone will raise money for environmental causes by making a range of jewellery from recycled mobile phone parts. Cerrone has worked with MobileMuster to utilize minerals in mobile phones to create the range, raising over \$3,000 at an auction which was donated to Landcare Australia.

“The six pieces in the jewellery range contained the same amount of gold that can be recovered from recycling 8,700 mobile phones or mining between 20 to 25 tonnes of gold ore,” said MobileMuster manager Rose Read.

Luke Coleman

## Destra takes 10% stake in Beyond

Destra has taken a 10% stake in Beyond International, expanding its exposure to the film and television distribution market and providing it with a solid content production relationship.

The latest in a long run of content investments, Beyond is arguably Destra's most high-profile to date. The company is Australia's largest rights distributors and produces brands such as MythBusters, South Side Story, Singing Office and Hot Property.

Destra has already acquired film distributor Magna Pacific, with which it is experimenting with future on-demand online distribution platforms. It has paid \$1.3284 million for the 10.03% stake in Beyond.

Tim Marshall

## **Epitiro to provide official NZ broadband data**

Broadband performance monitor Epitiro has today announced that it will be supplying data on New Zealand's ISPs for the use of the Commerce Commission.

Epitiro will provide data on up to ten of the largest ISPs from its multiple measuring sites sprinkled around the country. The company will also provide consumers with the opportunity to measure their ISP's performance from their home PCs as of next year.

Telecommunications commissioner Ross Patterson says it is critical that the Commission has "robust data" to measure the impact of competition on broadband offerings.

Epitiro New Zealand managing director Mike Cranna said the relationship would be positive for industry and consumers. He said the Commission will publish the data on a quarterly basis and that these will be quarterly "definitive" statements. Epitiro will continue to publish results specific to certain industry issues.

According to the Commerce Commission, a monitoring provision in the Telecommunications Act 2001 gave it increased monitoring responsibilities. This came into effect in December last year.

Under the Act, the Commission must monitor competition in the market including the performance and development of the telecommunications markets. It may also conduct interviews, reviews and studies into any matter relating to the telecommunications industry and must make the information public. However, the Commission is not required to make all data and information public.

Paul Clearwater

## **Verizon claims 100Gbps trial first**

Verizon Communications claims to have successfully conducted the first 100Gbps optical field trial. The demo carried a live video feed the 312 miles between Miami and Tampa at 100Gbps while simultaneously accommodating separate 10Gbps data streams. Alcatel-Lucent provided its 1625 LambdaXtreme Transport infrastructure for the trial, enabling Verizon to use a single wavelength instead of the 10 separate 10Gbps wavelengths used in previous trials.

"This trial proves what we've been saying: The move from 40Gbps - available from Verizon Business today - to 100Gbps will be exponentially quicker than the move from 10Gbps to 40Gbps. As the industry moves toward 100Gbps, we're leading the way," said Verizon Business network operations head Fred Briggs. "Transmission at 100Gbps will enable low latency and significant improvement in real-time transaction. Trading institutions and other Verizon customers using real-time communications will find the associated performance very attractive."

## **RIGHTNOW RELEASES LATEST CRM UPDATE**

RightNow Technologies has released the November update to its CRM system. The latest release includes a new 'knowledge syndication' widget that allows users to syndicate and distribute dynamic content, such as frequently asked questions, product specifications and warranty information, across multiple web sites. It also now includes 12 new languages, bringing the total to 33.

## **AUSTRALIAN NET AD PROGRAM LAUNCHED**

Fast Search and Transfer today launched its new 'Fast AdMomentum' product, a contextual advertising platform for online media companies and telecommunications service providers. The Australian-made product was developed by a team of 20 in Melbourne who specialise in "advertising and recommendation related technologies."