

DATA CENTRES: Portable containers hit Australia

ELECTRONIC FRONTIERS: New filtering campaign

UFB TENDER: Curran sees delay in minister's comment

COMMENT

E-health is all very well as a NBN driver but it need to have standards first

COMMUNICATIONS DAY

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Telecom NZ tells investors: we could list Chorus

CEO Paul Reynolds floated the idea of splitting Telecom NZ into two listed companies at the company's investor briefing day in Sydney. But he said the company will only act in the best interest of shareholders. Demerging the already arms-length Chorus network operation could be an alternative way of delivering the degree of separation needed to allow Telecom NZ to take part in the government's NZ\$1.5 billion ultrafast broadband (UFB) project. The rules of engagement say a company joining the project cannot also offer retail services.

Reynolds said any demerger would require the approval of Telecom NZ shareholders and debt holders.

He said the downside of splitting the company into component parts would be the duplication of overheads and a loss of flexibility. On the other hand, a break-up of the company is likely to ease the regulatory burden on Telecom NZ. Reynolds previously said Telecom NZ is the possibly world's most heavily regulated telco. He told the briefing if the company does not take part in the UFB the regulatory burden it faced would be the "single-biggest overhang for shareholder value".

Yesterday's announcement goes a stage further than the comments made on Monday when Telecom NZ formally confirmed it was considering separation. At that time Reynolds said in a prepared statement: "Telecom's strong preference is to align the interests of its equity and debt holders with those of the Government and New Zealanders". The company had previously hinted at separation, but as recently as the half year result briefing in February, Reynolds told CommsDay the company had no intention of separating. Monday's formal statement followed a story in The Dominion-Post at the weekend which said Telecom NZ will sell some or all of its Chorus operation to the government as part of a deal to secure the UFB contract. In effect this would see part of Telecom NZ renationalised by a centre right government twenty years after it was privatised by a Labour government.

On Tuesday the New Zealand government formally ruled-out renationalising all or part of Chorus. Both Communications Minister Steven Joyce and Prime Minister John Key denied any intention to do so.

And a trade sale now appears unlikely. Reynolds said a partial sale of the division was "unlikely to deliver sufficient value", although full sale of the network operation remains a possibility.

SIMPLIFY, REDUCE COSTS: Reynolds told investors next year's focus would be on simplifying the business, reducing costs, retaining existing customers and growing the mobile business. He said the company is currently reducing duplication and moving functions from business units to more central control.

Chief Financial Officer Russ Houlden told the meeting Telecom NZ expects to make cuts of around NZ\$622 million annually, that's NZ\$98 million more than last year's plan. The cuts will be offset by expenses increasing by NZ\$448 million during the period, due to growth. Overall the company expects to reduce costs by NZ\$174 million a year. Houlden also said 2011 would be the low point, with the company



returning to growth in the 2012 financial year.

Telecom NZ shares recovered slightly following Reynolds presentation and ended the day up 1 cent in line with the overall NZX index. However the company's shares are down 22% on the year compared with a market decline of 6.7%.

Bill Bennett

GreenEdge plans containerised data centres

Brisbane-based data centre startup GreenEdge Data is preparing to rollout a homegrown containerised data centre on its first site in West Melbourne, Victoria. The company has earmarked a former industrial site in the city and is also looking at a further two sites in Melbourne and a smaller site in Brisbane.

GreenEdge is likely to be the first Australian company to bring out a high-density containerised solution and believes its technology will also meet a growing need for high-density data centre capacity as well as offering a number of unique energy-saving features.

Containerised data centres typically use a standard shipping container to house server racks and associated equipment and were initially put into use by Google, at first secretly about six years ago, while Sun Microsystems was one of the first companies to commercialise the idea and has since been followed by IBM and HP.

GreenEdge will be the first Australian company to offer a data centre in a shipping container and the company has also added its own patented technology to its offering. Canberra-based company Datapod has also announced modular data centres using custom-made containers in a tie-up with US vendor APC.

Lex Brasell, who came up with the product design and who is now the company's technical director, said he had been working on the concept for the past six years.

Two years ago he formed the company with partners Simon Dawson and David Pollard and the team have now assembled a stable of suppliers that will also be involved in selling the final product, dubbed MaxEdge.

According to Brasell, the containerised data centre can be set up and connected in around half an hour after being delivered on site, while different configurations can be achieved by combining containers.

"The idea is to keep it simple and to cut out complexity," Brasell said, noting that GreenEdge's approach meant it was also vendor-independent.

A key feature of the GreenEdge build was that it can offer high-density racks, with its current version capable of doing 18kw per rack. "It's important because that's where the market is going. Everyone is looking for high density but there is a real shortage out there in the data centre space," he said.

Another issue that will grow in importance is energy efficiency. While many large data centres might have a power utilisation efficiency (PUE) of around 2.0, GreenEdge says it will get down to a PUE of around 1.1.

The company is currently looking at how it can harness a number of cutting-edge technologies, such as gas-turbine technology for power and a concept known as "free air" cooling, where ambient air is used to cool servers, in future. "To be the greenest data centre is our ultimate goal, but some of this is still in the future," Brasell noted.

The first GreenEdge site in West Melbourne will be around 1600 square meters and will offer 144 racks at 18kw per rack.

The company is also in talks with a large corporate that has "a need for hundreds of boxes", but according to Brasell the market is wide, with potential customers being existing data centres, companies that want just a single box as well as the likes of mining companies that want a modular solution.



GreenEdge has also signed up with a major financial company to offer both leasing and rental of the equipment.

The company is being assisted by Melbourne-based corporate advisor Wantrup Corporate Services, which has been helping it assemble a team to scale up the business.

Geoff Long

EFA says it's time to tell mum, not 'stay mum' on the internet filter

Electronic Frontiers Australia has launched its latest offensive on the proposed mandatory internet filter with its "Time to Tell Mum" anti-censorship campaign. And it has claimed that communications minister Stephen Conroy's reluctance to sanction a full scale AFP investigation into the search giant's privacy breaches reveals the ulterior motives of his attack.

The "Time to Tell Mum" campaign, run by the not-for-profit online civil liberties organisation, encourages Australians to tell their friends and families – especially their mums – about why the Government's plan won't help protect families.

"All the evidence suggests that the more people know about this policy, the less likely they are to support it," said EFA's chair Colin Jacobs. "That's why we think it's crucial that people who understand what's going on reach out and inform those close to them."

The campaign is aimed at highlighting the purported misconception fostered by the government that the filter will in some way help families. "The Government took this policy to the last election as a 'cyber-safety' tool to help parents, but it has since changed into something completely different. Not only will the filter not protect children, it might give parents a false sense of security and actually lessen the supervision kids get online," said Jacobs.

The EFA was recently drawn into the Google privacy debate after communications minister Conroy blasted the search giant in his senate estimates broadside. His critics, including the EFA and the Greens, claimed the attack was motivated by retribution for Google's anti-filtering stance rather than any genuine concern. Conroy's office has waved aside these suggestions by pointing to the fact that filter critics such as the EFA have also condemned Google.

"Yes we have been critical of the mistakes Google has made but we are not critical of Google," a spokesman for the EFA told CommsDay. "What the Senator did was not just speak out, but launch an extraordinary attack on Google itself. Very little of anything he said had any basis in fact.

"About the only thing he did get right was that Google had made a mistake and even then he tried to characterise it as deliberate," continued the spokesman. "They have been singled out because of their stance on censorship and it is an attempt to discredit Google's opinion on what should happen with the policy because it does not coincide with the Senator's."

Conroy has held off from launching a full scale AFP investigation into the breaches and is awaiting the outcome of the privacy commissioner's report. "That is a smokescreen," said the EFA spokesman. "The privacy commissioner will examine whether Google ran afoul of the Privacy Act. The AFP, if they become involved will likely look at the Telecommunications Act. These are separate things... he just doesn't want to get caught up in backing what he said by translating it into action. His priority was to discredit Google, he now does not want to follow through."

Miro Sandev

Telstra tech on call on weekends

Telstra customers will be able to book technical service appointments on weekends and the telco has also announced several new initiatives to improve customer service, in line with CEO David Thodey's mantra. Telstra has announced that it will simplify the voice systems available to customers who call the company, and is trialling a service to call customers back if telephone queues delay them speaking to a consultant.

"Improving the service we offer customers is Telstra's highest priority and today's initiatives will help us do that," Thodey explained.

Customers in metropolitan and some regional areas will now be able to book to have their fixed line or BigPond cable service installed or repaired on weekends. Those with an unresolved complaint can call Telstra and say 'complaint' and will be transferred directly to a consultant to resolve the issue.

Thodey said that the changes were recommended by company employees and more than 700,000 Australians whose experience had been formally tracked. He has made the focus on customer experience the central pillar of his now year long tenure at the helm of the telco.

Meanwhile, Telstra has also announced that it is making 10mbps broadband available to businesses, involving to 5000 Telstra exchanges before the end of 2010.

Miro Sandev

GS1: it's time to act properly on e-health

It's high time the health sector joined together to effectively lobby the government over the introduction of potentially life-saving electronic standardisation practices, according to a prominent e-Health standards organisation. Speaking at the CeBIT conference in Sydney, GS1 CEO Maria Palazzolo emphasised the vital importance of standardisation and urged the assembled members of the health sector to stop fumbling about and begin a concerted effort.

"Everyone wants the same thing. They want to be able to identify data correctly first time, every time," she said. "If that information is wrong, in the health care sector it is a disaster. Because if you get it wrong, you are risking people's lives. That is why a standardised approach is more critical in health care than any other sector."

Palazzolo was also critical of the hesitation to fully adopt and implement bar coding in Australia's health sector. "We have not adopted or implemented the full use of bar coding in the health care sector in this country to anywhere near [the level of] the advantages that it could provide you," she said.

"We have a lot of work to do and we need to do it in a coordinated way, the whole sector has to support it. Just developing global standards is not enough, they must be implemented, and the only way that is going to happen is if industry comes together and calls for it."

GS1 has worked closely with the National E-Health Transition Authority on standards development and implementation, including the National Product Catalogue which is a single source of item master data for health institution procurement. It is hosted on GS1net, a data synchronisation service supported by GS1.

"The standards that are developed in Australia are not just used nationally, they have a global connotation as well, Palazzolo explained. "We gather requirements from the Australian industries and we take them to a global process that is called the GSMP which requires us to have all of the requirements from industry, supported by industry, with commitment from industry that they will follow through on the process. Once they go through that process, it becomes a global standard."

SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL e-RECORDS SCHEME One recently mooted local initiative in e-health standardisation is the federal government's proposed e-records scheme. The federal budget earmarked A\$466.7 million over two years to fund the creation of a 'personally controlled electronic health record' system, which is to enable Australians (and health providers) to securely access their health information. The system is to provide summaries of patients' health information and secure any-time, any-place access for both patients and health care providers to the patient's health records. But some industry analysts have suggested that the mooted scheme had given rise to widespread confusion about the government's goals because it is only funded for 2 years.

Miro Sandev

INTERNODE TAPS INTO IPAD WITH MIFI PROMOTION

Broadband provider Internode is tapping into the interest generated by Apple's iPad with a promotion on its MiFi wireless access point, which can deliver 3G access for up to five iPads. The company announced that its customers can buy the unit for \$A299, down from its retail price of \$399, when bundled with a 24-month NodeMobile Data 3G broadband service. As well as iPads, the MiFi can support up to five Wi-Fi devices such as laptops, notebooks, PDAs, smartphones and gaming consoles.

NEW ZEALAND

Joyce on trans-Tasman mobile roaming pact

New Zealand's communications minister Steven Joyce followed-up the previous day's announcement in Australia by his counterpart Senator Stephen Conroy confirming the two are working on a trans-Tasman mobile roaming agreement. He originally flagged the deal at last week's CommsDay Summit in Auckland.

Joyce said: "With the greatest volume of roaming traffic occurring between New Zealand and Australia - approximately one million visitors travel annually from each country to the other - it is appropriate that we look at that market."

"Trans-Tasman mobile roaming has the potential to bring great benefits, on a personal level for individuals wanting to stay connected, and on an economic level for companies doing business across the Tasman. However these benefits will not be fully realised if the market is not functioning efficiently."

Bill Bennett

Curran: Joyce has opened the door to delay on UFB partner process

New Zealand opposition communications spokesperson Clare Curran claims that communications minister Stephen Joyce has left the door open to delay on the partner selection process for the government's broadband rollout. "I asked him in parliament today could he guarantee that the process underway to select partners in the government's ultra-fast broadband initiative will not be delayed to suit the interests of the incumbent carrier," she said.

Curran told CommsDay that Joyce answered by saying "I can confirm that the current process being conducted by Crown Fibre holdings will not be sped up or slowed down or even remain the same for the benefit of any bidder. Crown Fibre Holdings is currently conducting a competitive process designed to produce the best possible result for New Zealanders. The company has some flexibility and the time table for its own discretion if that would enhance the outcome for taxpayers and consumers."

According to the Labour spokeswoman this has opened the door for an announcement of delay. "For me that means there is going to be a delay. Joyce is stonewalling. He is not a minister who is willing to provide any extra information or engage in public debate and he is not listening," she told CommsDay. Parliamentary transcripts were not available at the time of publication.

Miro Sandev

AIR NZ OFFERS MOBILE TEXT AND EMAIL INFLIGHT

Air New Zealand will be adding mobile phone and data capability to its new Boeing 777-300 aircraft, with the first due for delivery in November this year. The new service will enable its customers to use their iPhone, Blackberry and GSM mobile phones to safely send and receive emails and text during their flights. Customers can also use their Netbooks or laptops in conjunction with their mobile broadband connection.

COMMENT BY RICHARD CHIRGWIN

Risking a journey into my own ignorance

So as to forestall the obvious criticism that I don't know enough about this subject to be writing about it, I'll agree. But being unable to resist diving in head-first, here goes.

If you asked ten experts to list the social benefits that justify advanced networks such as the proposed NBN, I would expect healthcare to land in the list from at least nine of them.

Tele-health has long held been a poster-child of high-speed networking pitch. And what's not to like? - remote specialists gain access to city facilities, high-resolution images can be exchanged across great dis-

tances in an acceptable time, anybody whose expertise is needed can see and form an opinion about an image and contribute their speciality to diagnosis and treatment. Other, less exotic (but of equal importance) information can traverse the network – like the patient’s heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, and the rest of the host of data that form a picture of someone’s medical condition.

We’ve all seen the demonstrations.

My recent and ongoing exposure to the world of health technology via illness in the family has given me one of those forehead-slapping moments that happens when you suddenly notice the “bleeding obvious”.

In healthcare, the “bleeding obvious” is something we all should be familiar with: standards.

The standards that we’re familiar with – TCP/IP at Layer 3, Ethernet or something similar at Layer 2, optical standards at Layer 1 – merely enable the connections between places.

Unless the information is usable at both ends of the connection, TCP/IP, Ethernet and fibre don’t offer any particular benefit beyond two specialists grabbing their mobiles and talking to each other.

One of the many, many tests I’ve learned about is a particular kind of imaging that uses a particular (and painfully costly) kind of ‘contrast medium’ (to colloquialise, radioactive dye) allowing it to take very high-resolution images of certain parts of the liver.

Like all radiology, the results were handed over to me in the familiar huge envelope, along with the admonition not to lose the DVD inside.

My first surprise was that in a major teaching hospital precinct, with probably enough cable to suspend the Sydney Harbour Bridge without breaking a fibre, with at least four major carriers represented in the names on duct covers in the surrounding streets, needed to transfer stuff on DVDs handed to patients to give to their doctors.

Inquiring into this, I got my second surprise. The images are in the vendor’s proprietary format – where have I heard this before? – and they need the vendor’s application to be viewed. And the application travels with the DVD and runs from the DVD.

Let’s quickly look into what the images themselves are. One way or another, a medical image is a high-resolution pixel map (or if we’re talking 3D images, lots of them) with particular pixel formatting and rendering, a file format for storage, and perhaps some kind of lossless compression.

What I don’t know is just how deeply this sort of thing runs – whether we’re looking at a behaviour ubiquitous throughout an industry, or merely the quirks of particular vendors.

But by now, you probably get my point: just how many examples are there of medicine only getting part of the benefits of standardised high-speed networks, because like so many industries, it’s hobbled by proprietary applications and file formats and transfer formats etcetera at the top?

Perhaps it’s not much – someone with appropriate expertise, feel free to let me know! – but I know for sure that it’s greater than zero. If governments, via their health departments, overlook this (or if they assume that standardisation is impossible merely because vendors say so), they won’t get the full healthcare benefits of the networks they’re building.

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Where Asia's telecom leaders meet

9am-10.45am PLENARY SESSION

9AM: Nucleus Connect CEO David Storrie
9.25AM: Qualcomm VP South East Asia,
South Pacific John Stefanac
9.50AM Cable&Wireless Worldwide
VP, carrier services, global markets Diarmid Massey
10.15AM Pacnet chief technology officer Wilfred
Kwan
10.40-11.00AM COFFEE BREAK
11AM Reliance Globalcom vice president Asia Pa-
cific Fabrizio Civitarese

11.25-1PM SPECIAL PRESENTATION FROM GILBERT+TOBIN

The New Landscape: Access in an NGN world

- • Gilbert+Tobin partner Peter Waters
- • Gilbert+Tobin partner Richard Pascoe
- • Gilbert+Tobin partner Martyn Taylor

Plus panel session moderated by Richard Pascoe
1-2.00PM LUNCH BREAK

2pm PLENARY CONTINUES

2PM: Tata Communications senior
vice president Byron Clatterbuck

2.20PM SPECIAL WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY & BUSINESS SESSION

2.20PM Ovum analyst Nathan Burley
2.35PM Nokia Siemens Networks Asia Pacific MD
Ricky Corker
2.55PM Motorola director, Vietnam Dr Ray Owen
3.10PM Tellabs' Chang Kian Kwan
3.25 COFFEE BREAK
3.40 CONFERENCE CONTINUES: Symbio Networks
wholesale marketing manager Alistair Slattery

4.00 INTERNATIONAL CAPACITY SESSION

4PM: General Dynamics' Information Technology
telecom engineer Steve Bershader
4.20PM PANEL SESSION with Tinet's Wilson Teng, Ar-
binet's John Tolton & Verizon manager, South Asia net-
work planning Chris Rezentes

4.45 CLOSING KEYNOTE

4.45PM Telstra International senior vice president,
Asia Greg Russell
5.05PM COMMSDAY ASIA PACIFIC AWARDS
5.20PM DRINKS

CHAIRMAN: Mark Hukill of PTC

MODERATOR: Grahame Lynch of CommsDay

Yes, I would like to attend the CommsDay Singapore Summit 2010

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