

handset in a home. Now there are a variety of telephones with features never before available in Australia that the consumer can purchase at a retail level. As long as the equipment is "TELECOM type approved", there is no problem in connecting to the line.

In its promotional role, TELECOM Australia is offering the business community more than was hitherto available. Its Datel service, for example, provides switched network and leased line services to a wide range of data transmission facilities. A new synchronous leased line service for the larger user, where long-distance communications are required, is provided by its digital data service with multiplexing facilities. TELECOM is actively promoting AUSTPAC, the new packet-switched data communications network, using packet switching technology purchased from France. TELECOM's two-node AUSTPAC network (one each in Melbourne and Sydney) was expanded to an eight-node network in 1984 to take in other capital cities.

Where it had been expected that Australia might soon be introducing a cable television service, as recommended by yet another enquiry, the Labor government in Canberra has effectively blocked this move for the time being.

Canada has been heavily involved in assisting Australian government ministers, departments and interested organizations in assessing the potential of having its own domestic communication satellite in the hope that there would be a spin-off to the Canadian satellite industry. Hughes was awarded the contract for the satellites due to be launched in July 1985. The major earth stations contracts have been awarded to Mitsubishi and NEC. Through its involvement in the South Australian-based manufacturer, Codan Pty. Ltd., the Saskatoon firm of SED Systems has been successful in providing sub-systems required for ground stations.

TELECOM Australia was given approval by the Labor government late in 1983 to establish a national videotex system for Australia. Tenders were issued in January 1984 for a system compatible with the British Prestel Standards. According to TELECOM Australia, their service, to be known as VIATEL, was to be operating by December 1984.

Initially VIATEL will be capable of working with existing Prestel terminals and databases now operating in Australia. It is possible that it may be able to provide access to other videotex protocols as these capabilities are developed. No definite assurances on this score have been received in response to representations made to the Australian Department of Communications and TELECOM Australia.

According to TELECOM Australia, any organization may set up a videotex system of a standard of their choice, and TELECOM's telephone and packet-switching networks will be available to them at standard TELECOM tariffs. TELECOM's immediate goal is to provide a gateway service to be used by the Prestel-compatible videotex systems already established in Australia.

Westpac Banking Corporation, with its Videonet System, and the CAS division of Mayne-Nickless Limited, which is the Australian agent for Infomart in Toronto, are the only effective users and promoters of Telidon/NAPLPS technology in a field dominated by Prestel-based systems. Mayne-Nickless has been joined recently by the Fairfax Group and the Rural Press as partners in its Agentel videotex project. Marketing opportunities are opening up for the provision of additional software, and possibly terminals, to this system. Competition for the terminal market is appearing from AT&T International with a compatible terminal. Opportunities for Canadian-supplied terminals and software are still considered to be good.

Several new videotex systems, aimed primarily at the rural sector, have recently been announced:

- Elders established a national videotex network covering 400 branches in June 1984, with a subscriber public service available by the end of 1984. The Elders system will use Aragon Prestel-compatible software and will be able to offer both colour and graphics. Digital equipment will provide a Vax 11/750 as the main driving computer for the Elders system.
- Agri-Data Australia Pty. Ltd. will provide a specialized rural videotex service in Australia. It will use TELECOM's special data transmission system, although it will have the capacity of tying into TELECOM's Viatel system when this comes on stream. However, the sponsors of this system are not as well positioned as Mayne-Nickless or Elders.

Canadian Marketing Activity

The Canadian marketing strategy for videotex has been to concentrate on specialized applications such as agriculture, weather, tourism and audio-visuals. These approaches have been profitable in the North American market. However, the strategy alternative of offering a broadly based service with many categories of information, directed at a wide spectrum of users, has yet to be proven profitable. Because the Viatel service is broadly targeted within the Australian business community, it carries with it a number of risks. If Viatel succeeds, there will nevertheless be opportunities for Telidon/NAPLPS applications based on the graphics capability. If difficulties are encountered by Viatel, TELECOM could reasonably be expected to show a greater interest in Telidon/NAPLPS. In effect, TELECOM Australia has not ruled out future involvement with Telidon/NAPLPS either in addition to or as an alternative to Prestel.

Recent marketing activity by Canadian telecommunications companies includes participation in the high-technology exhibition and seminars held in Melbourne and Sydney during late February and early March 1984. The mood concerning potential business in the telecommunications field both through TELECOM Australia and the private sector was generally optimistic.

The central marketing objective for Canadian firms should be to seek creative ways of functioning within