

## AAP TELECOMMUNICATIONS GROWS RAPIDLY IN COMPETITIVE MARKET

*AAP Telecommunications had prospered in competition with the might of AOTC and Optus because of its access to market-proven US technology, a unique billing system, a strict business plan and a highly-motivated staff, Chief Executive Barry Wheeler said.*

He said the company, the third major competitor in telephone network competition, represents a viable alternative to the big two carriers in the vital business telecommunications market.

Mr Wheeler said that AAPT was living proof that the Federal Government's micro-economic reform process in telecommunications was working.

The company, which began operations in July, 1990, has signed up 600 companies as clients and is well on its way to a hundredfold increase in revenue in three years.

Its staff has increased from 25 to a fast-growing 160, including some 25 salespeople, and it has eight offices and seven switching centres around Australia.

But Mr Wheeler has appealed for rigid adherence to the rules laid down in the 1991 legislation providing for wider competition in telecommunications if players like AAPT are to grow and Australia is to achieve an orderly transition to full competition.

Speaking at the Australian Telecommunications Users Group (ATUG) conference in Sydney, he expressed concern at a "disturbing undercurrent within the industry towards tidying up the legislation or tinkering with the regulations" to benefit one or other of the major players.

AAPT had known from the outset that competition was not going to be easy nor gentlemanly, he said.

But instead of manipulation now, the industry needed stability, and he suggested there should be no amendment to the rules for at least two more years.

"Any tinkering with those rules is not only tantamount to shifting the goal posts, but it also consigns the players to compete on shifting sands merely because one or another figures he can engineer a competitive advantage that may have nothing to do with consumer benefit.

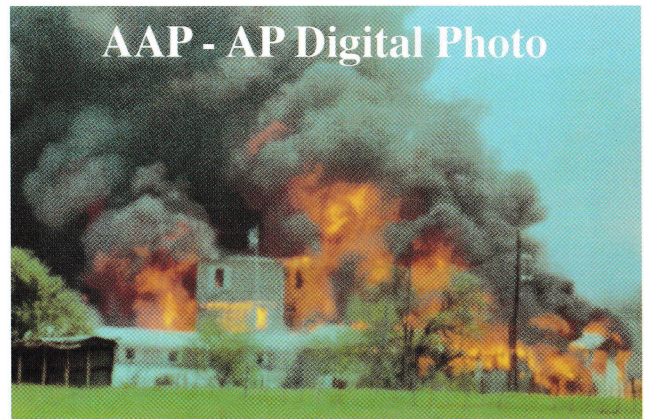
"As we see it at AAP Telecommunications, the framework for competition is the bedrock on which the company was founded and which the industry is now developing."

AAPT had drawn heavily from the experience of one of its shareholders, MCI Communications Corporation, and its battle to establish the right to take on AT&T in the US long distance market.

The third shareholder in AAPT is the Todd Corporation, which together with MCI is also a significant shareholder in New Zealand's second carrier, Clear Communications.

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**ALSO INSIDE:** ● BARNEY BLUNDELL PROFILE ● WILD IN ANTARCTICA  
● WORLD YOUTH SOCCER ● ELECTION NIGHT ● OPEN HEART OPEN  
● GRAND OLD MAN OF GRANGE ● TRAVELNET LAUNCH



**AAP - AP Digital Photo**

*This graphic shot of the inferno which destroyed the headquarters of the Branch Davidian sect at Waco, Texas, was one of the first AAP-AP digital pictures brought into Australia.*

The new service, which will be progressively available to subscribers from June 1, was demonstrated to the newspaper industry at the PANPA Conference in Adelaide in late April.

Production Editor Geoff Want said digital pictures would be delivered via a high-speed satellite network and improve on the quality of analog pictures by 25 to 40 per cent.

Digital delivery will cut the transmission time per picture or colour separation from about seven minutes to two.

Sydney newspapers will be the first to receive the new service, followed by the other metropolitan and major regional dailies – Canberra, Wollongong and Newcastle – then the other regionals and New Zealand.

All clients would be converted by early next year.

Mr Want said AAP needed to move quickly to digital, which provided greatly improved quality for newspapers, to maintain its dominant market position and offhead strong competition from other picture suppliers.

Media Marketing Director Robin Strathdee said that PANPA – the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association – had developed into one of the four biggest newspaper industry conferences in the world.

This year for the first time the attendance figure topped the thousand mark with a total of 1018 people taking part.

"If we are to serve the newspaper industry in the way both we and they would like, we need to keep abreast of developments and emerging trends on both the marketing and technical sides of the industry, and attendance at PANPA is one of the best ways to do that," Mr Strathdee said.

He said the growing importance of digital transmission was illustrated by the production of PANPA's own 32-page electronic newspaper on the last day of the conference.

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## AAPT Grows Rapidly

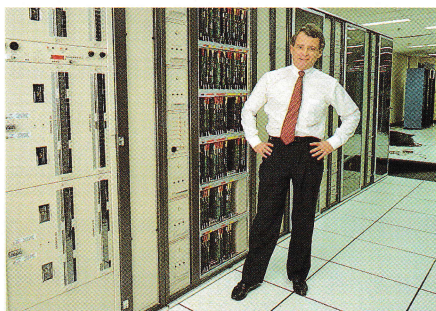
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"Two years ago we had a strict corporate mandate to focus on the needs of business and it's still the same doctrine that drives us today," Mr Wheeler said.

"It is a doctrine that is built on the belief that even though the opportunities may be mouth-watering, the ever present danger is that failure to manage high growth is failure to deliver on the expectations of our customers.

"Focus for us is not only a maxim, it's almost a religion," he said.

"We have a long term plan and that plan is dependent on serving the business market, but



AAPT Chief Executive Barry Wheeler pictured in front of the DSC toll switch at Glebe which forms an important part of its telecommunications network

we also have to differentiate ourselves not only from the two carriers, but from other service providers or resellers."

AAPT did this on price advantage, by introducing new features through new technology, and by being aggressive, responsive and innovative in the quest to satisfy its particular market niche.

"We've got the access to the market-proven MCI technology, the centrally based intelligent network platform, the billing system and the MCI expertise.

"That immediately differentiates us. Also we have a highly motivated staff eager to operate in a climate of innovation and responsiveness."

Mr Wheeler said the company's InSight billing system immediately differentiated AAPT from the half a dozen or so other service providers who were competing for a share of the market below the two carriers.

"What we tell clients is that we will be your telecommunications manager. We will send you a single bill with everything on it.

"You will not get any other telecommunication bills. Our bill can be presented in a number of formats, including graphs, to illustrate the patterns of calls made. Every call is recorded and you can have the account on disk for your own internal analysis as well as in hard copy."

Mr Wheeler said that AAPT operated at arm's length from the carriers, though it was in part

reliant upon maintaining a healthy business relationship with them, principally Telecom at this stage. It had established its independence through the installation of toll switches, microwave links, a superior billing system and an interconnect agreement that embraced dialled access.

AAPT has negotiated an interconnect agreement with Telecom which requires its users to dial a 1414 access code to link into the Telecom network.

Asking a user to dial the prefix would clearly not have been feasible, but two clever technical innovations have removed the necessity for anyone to do so. PABX's can be programmed to insert the code automatically whenever 0 is dialled to indicate an STD or international call. A compact auto-dialler unit performs the same task for those clients without a PABX.

Mr Wheeler also appealed at ATUG for pre-selected access to the main trunk routes by AAPT and other service providers once the national ballot requesting customers to express a preference between Telecom and Optus was finalised.

This will put in place a system that will recognise customers of one or the other carrier without them having to dial an access prefix.

AAPT's staff includes six US secondees from MCI on two to three year contracts. All will be replaced by Australians at the end of that time with several local staff members undergoing intensive training courses in the United States.

Mr Wheeler lays great stress on the corporate ethos of AAPT. He regards it as an exciting place to work and intends to keep it that way. The staff is young and many of them choose to work there for the sheer adventure and the challenge.

Everyone in the company has the opportunity to earn an annual bonus from incentive schemes.

Great emphasis is placed on teamwork and informality. "We have mufti days once a month when people can come to work in their board shorts or dressed however they wish, and we have regular barbecues on the balcony.

"Our culture is one of constant reflection and change. Responding to mistakes by improving in appropriate increments is ingrained in the corporate ethos," he told ATUG.

"No one has to tell us that we haven't been here forever or that we haven't spent hundreds of millions of dollars in anticipation of the good times to come.

"Much of what we are doing – in fact almost all – is ground-breaking in Australia," he said.

AAPT's clients range from the household name multinationals with complex voice, facsimile and data needs to firms with a dozen or so employees.

It aims to save these companies an average of 10-15 per cent and up to 30 per cent on STD and overseas calls.

## PANPA

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AAP supplied both digital pictures and text for the newspaper, which featured full pages of AAP domestic and international copy in the world news, business and finance and sports sections.

"Our very active participation in this important project will continue to bring home to the industry that we are a vital part of it."

Mr Strathdee said that the level of interest in AAP products had been most pleasing.



Sharing a joke on the PANPA stand are Andrew Pritchard, Peter Brown and Geoff Want

Brisbane's Courier-Mail had ordered three more NewsTrack terminals to go with the two already installed and there had been firm enquiries from two other metropolitan newspapers and four regional dailies.

Mr Strathdee said it was increasingly important for AAP to be aware of industry directions as competitors in specific areas, such as colour graphics and pictures and dialup databases, meant newspapers could no longer be taken for granted as automatic clients of AAP.

"By making a major effort to display digital pictures in competition with others who have newly switched to this technology, we were able to reassure our long-standing clients that we are at the forefront of the technological developments they wish to use," he said.

Getting the news and picture feeds into the electronic newspaper as well as the AAP stand and to other vendors of hardware systems had meant hard work over long hours for Product Support Executive Andrew Pritchard and Communications Supervisor Errol Spencer.

Errol is a key member of the project team implementing the phased conversion to digital pictures, which also includes Chris Knighton from Communications, Kerrie Bray of Engineering, Leigh Mackay from Media Marketing and Barrie Ward and Tony Houssarini from Picture Operations.

Chief Executive Lee Casey, David Jensen, General Manager Media and Corporate Services, and Editor in Chief Peter Brown also attended the PANPA Conference.

## NewsTrack a Winner at Soccer Tournament

AAP had a greater than normal interest in the World Youth Soccer Championships held in Australia during March. Not only was AAP's sports desk involved in reporting the tournament, with the international news agencies relying heavily on our coverage, but there was also an AAP connection inside the organisation – Sydney newsroom staffer and round ball aficionado Steve Dettre.

*He reports:*

*I was approached last year by the ASF to help with establishing the operation of the media centres and provision of services to the media in general.*

Having been lucky enough to have covered several major sporting events for AAP, I felt that I had some knowledge of what working journalists want at these types of events.

How many times have we all been in the position where we've cursed the organisation of an event – and sworn that if we ever had the chance, we'd do it better?

Well, I had the chance to at least try.

One of the key parts of my plan was to get AAP's NewsTrack service into the media centres in Sydney – it would be the key to successfully keeping the media informed.

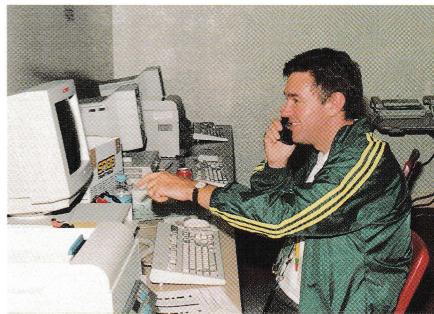
After negotiations with Jay Hannon, Business Manager, Electronic Products, National Sales Manager George Pardon, plus Telecom and the ASF's Project Manager George Dick, we had a NewsTrack terminal installed in both the Main Media Centre at the Boulevard Hotel and at the Stadium Media Centre adjacent to the Sydney Football Stadium.

It certainly was novel being an AAP subscriber after some 14 years as an employee!

For anyone who has never really seen it in operation, NewsTrack is definitely worth a



*Some on-field action during the tournament.*



*Steve Dettre taps into NewsTrack at the World Youth Soccer Championships press centre.*

look. It gives a subscriber immediate access to any story transmitted by AAP's Sussex Street newsroom.

As a result, the Sydney Media Centres were able to access stories on the tournament, and provide the 700-odd international and Australian journalists with information about matches in other centres.

These stories were quickly downloaded to floppy disks, transferred into the centre's word processing system and produced into stylish news releases for distribution to journalists.

Match stories were supplemented with previews, weather forecasts, occasional general news releases and even, on March 13, with election updates.

A variety of international journalists who worked out of the Main Media Centre would routinely start their day by accessing NewsTrack to "read in" about what was happening in the tournament, as well as what was happening "back home".

Responses to the system were always heartening.

Argentine journalist, Edmundo Armando, became a firm devotee, spending the first part of his working day glued to the NewsTrack screen.

He was not alone, with a growing number queuing to use it as the tournament progressed.

If there was one complaint, it was that they couldn't take it into the hotel's breakfast room to read while they were having their coffee and croissants each morning.

## AAP Sponsors Tennis Veteran

Bob McCarthy is one of Australia's lesser known sporting greats.

But he's won seven World Veterans Tennis titles and AAP helped sponsor him in his quest for an eighth in Barcelona in April.

Bob was defending his 65 years and over title, which he had won for the past three years in a row. Unfortunately his winning run came to an end and he was eliminated in the quarter finals.

McCarthy, 69, has also won two world titles in the 55 years plus age group and two in the 60 years plus division. In a marathon campaign in Europe last year, he won 20 tournaments in a row and returned home exhausted, but undefeated.



AAP Information Services Pty Ltd is a leading sponsor of veterans tennis in Australia and Chief Executive Lee Casey is pictured presenting Bob with a cheque for \$1,000 before his departure.

Australia had only one singles winner at Barcelona, Gordon Henley in the over 75 years age group. Liz Craig and Carol Campling teamed to win the over 40s women's doubles.

The AAP Group has also provided a \$5,000 sponsorship for the 23rd NSW Veterans Tennis Championships to be played at Rockdale over the June long weekend – June 11, 12, 13 and 14.

Some 250 players from NSW, Queensland, Victoria and the ACT will be taking part.

They include a number of former star players who are now coaches and trainers.

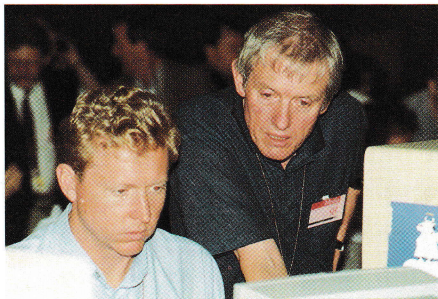
Age groups rise in five-year spans from the over 40s to over 65s.

# Election Night to Remember

March 13 was the biggest night of the year for editorial staff in the Canberra bureau. In the last issue, we brought you their reports from the Federal election campaign trail. Now Kate Hannon captures the atmosphere as the votes were counted:

*We had an esky, beer (light), wine, soft drinks, opera glasses and a few sandwiches. No it wasn't a picnic or a day at the races. It was election night.*

AAP had its customary benchspace amid an enormous number of news organisations in the National Tally Room, which was housed in Canberra's cavernous National Exhibition Centre.



*Don Woolford (right) discusses the election count with Terry O'Connor.*

We'd installed four Coyote terminals (linked to our central editorial system in Sydney) one of which blew up soon after it was plugged into its temporary home.

Communications supervisor Errol Spencer had to drive 15 kilometres back to Parliament House to get another one, but couldn't get back into the tally room for an hour due to a bomb scare.

Then, half an hour before the count began, media organisations had to scramble to cover the crash of an old MIG fighter jet into a Canberra suburb, killing the plane's two occupants.

One corner of the tally room was set aside for the party functionaries – like Labor's Bob Hogg and the Liberals' Andrew Robb – who spent most of the frenetic night on the phone, peering into their Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) computers.

Their fenced-in area — to keep the media out — which quickly became known as the pig-pen, attracted journalists like moths to a flame whenever a party heavy was about to speak.

Despite the millions of dollars in technology at our fingertips and the hundreds of experts explaining it all to the public, it was virtually impossible to tell what was really going on.

Radio and TV journalists and crews, all wired for sound and vision, roamed the tally room in search of prey and, when they caught one for a live cross, would find colleagues nestling at their elbows, tape recorders at the ready.

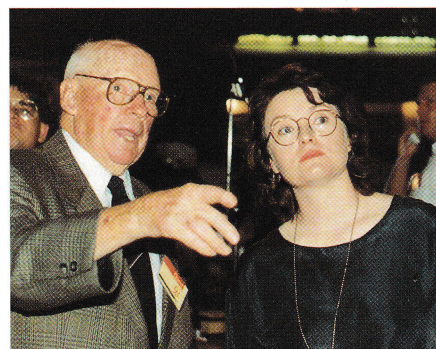
Apart from the political personalities and number crunchers already snared by the networks for election night commentary, luminaries like Labor stalwart Fred Daly and psephologist Malcom Mackerras attracted the attention of a media pack still on automatic pilot after a five-week election campaign.

Chief political correspondent Don Woolford (the opera buff who provided the glasses) led a team of seven AAP journalists in the tally room that night, though we were later joined by other Canberra bureau staffers unable to keep away from the excitement.

The first votes were counted at 5.15 pm (AEST) with Tasmania, still on daylight saving time, closing its polling booths an hour earlier than the eastern mainland states.

From the moment it became obvious there was a sizeable swing towards Labor there, the night became unpredictable in the sense that virtually no-one had expected Labor to win.

A reflection of that was Tony Vermeer's complaint the week before that he wanted to be with the winner on election night and NOT Paul Keating at the Bankstown Sports Club.



*Labour legend Fred Daly points out the counting trends to Kate Hannon.*

Mark Lever spent the long night with John Hewson at the Inter-Continental Hotel.

At the back of the media area, and squeezed in front of the four huge raised stages built for the television networks, was a roped-off public area which gradually filled with curious onlookers and boisterous Labor supporters.

Armed with our own personal AEC computer, we were able to file up-to-the-minute stories on the counting in crucial marginal seats and Senate results.

Don's opera glasses came in handy in those rare quiet moments when you tired of looking at the huge tally board and taking panic phone calls from AAP Sydney.

You could, for a bit of temporary amusement, read the TV presenters' idiot sheets or teleprompters: "...back to you Kerry."

Sometime after midnight, the AEC finished its counting, the noise died down and most of the media contingent, government members and staffers headed off across town to the National Press Club for a post-election drink.

But the stunning election result left unmoved one seasoned, non-AAP journalist who had spent a couple of years reporting from a well-known totalitarian state.

Standing in a tally room food queue, she raised a few eyebrows with her complaint about having to cover the election at all: "Millions of people around the world get along perfectly well without this democracy business!"

## New Bureau Chiefs in London, Canberra

*Don Woolford, who completed six years as head of AAP's Canberra bureau with coverage of the Federal election, will take up his new appointment as chief correspondent in London in August.*

He will spend a few weeks in the Sydney office before taking extended leave on his way to London including a month studying French in Vichy.

Tony Vermeer has taken over as Chief Correspondent in Canberra.

Mike Osborne will return to Sydney at the end of the year after two years as head of the London bureau.

Don claims the length of the Canberra posting as his second AAP record. The first was his five years in Port Moresby.

John Brock will also return to Sydney at the end of the English summer after three years in the London bureau. He will be replaced there by Karen Noack from the Canberra bureau.

Trevor Marshallsea is the new correspondent in Hobart, replacing Brian Rochford, who returns to Sydney.

# Wild in Antarctica

Christie Wild is not your average office manager. She is also an environmental scientist and a mountaineer with years of snow and ice experience in Scotland, the French and Swiss Alps and in New Zealand.

Little wonder then that she was invited to be a field assistant on a study trip to Antarctica, or that she jumped at the chance.

Christie, 33, has a post graduate diploma in environmental science from Macquarie University and is currently studying for her Masters.

The Antarctic trip will help towards that goal and she will be writing up papers for publication in scientific journals.

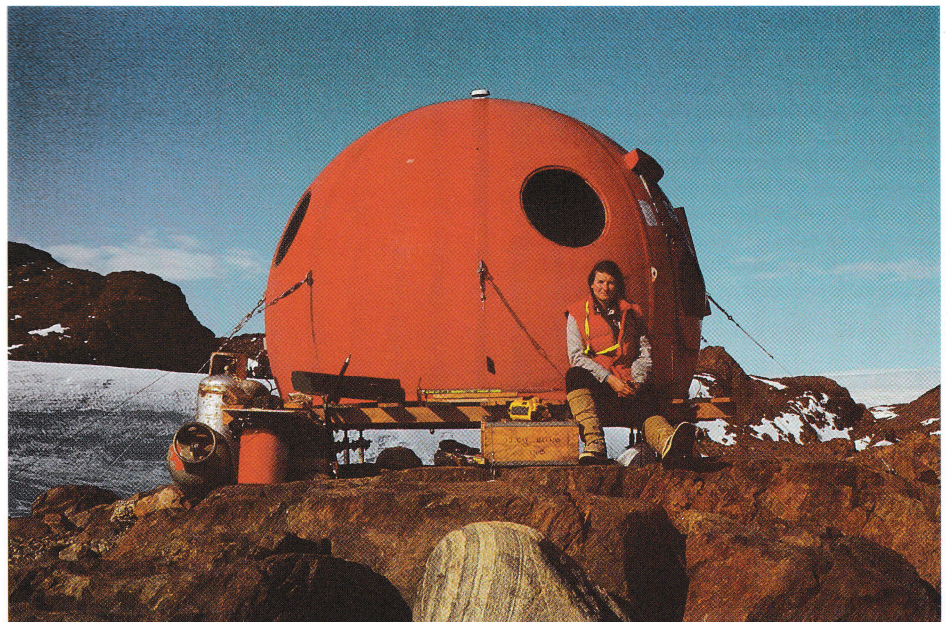
Christie's project was to study the mosses and lichens which grow in response to nutrients from bird nesting and feeding areas in the Vestfold Hills along the edge of the Antarctic ice sheet, east of Davis Station.

"AAP Telecommunications gave me leave of absence to take advantage of this amazing opportunity and I sailed out of Hobart in November for the three week journey to Davis," she said.

"The journey down is superb, icebergs floating past the cabin window, day after day of smashing through pack ice, seeing penguins, albatross and crab eater seals on the ice floes.

"Then arriving at Davis, which looks like a shanty mining town, and finding that my living quarters on base consisted of one of the four bunks set up in an old metal sea container."

Mostly, however, Christie and her fellow researcher Michelle Leishman, who is completing her doctorate, lived in a tent about 17 kilometres away from the base.



Christie Wild pictured outside the melon hut which was her home in Antarctica.



Christie, a keen photographer, captured this penguin in the act of propelling itself from the water to the ice.

**"The journey down is superb, icebergs floating past the cabin window, day after day of smashing through pack ice, seeing penguins, albatross and crab eater seals on the ice floes."**

Helicopters flew in their food supplies and every evening at seven they had a radio schedule with the base to ensure they were safe and well.

During this linkup, the radio operators would read them out sections from the AAP news bulletins, delivered to the Antarctic from Hobart via NewsTrack.

"The world trouble spots seemed very far away from the vast stillness of ice and rock which was our home for three months," Christie said.

"Highlights were abseiling down into the deep icy blue crevasses, ice climbing up the side of a huge waterfall, travelling out across the sea ice in the midnight sunshine to the penguin rookeries, lying reading and drinking port in the tent with a 55 knot blizzard blowing around us, and getting a chopper back to base occasionally

to have a shower, a good feed and to learn how to communicate with other human beings again. "We returned on the last boat back in March, leaving the 25 winterers to their long isolation as the sea ice closed them in.

"On the return trip, we watched for killer, minke and humpback whales during the day and for auroras in the long nights, said sad goodbyes to the last of the icebergs and slowly acclimatised to the lack of snow and the rising temperatures."

Christie was formerly Training Manager at AAPT and has now been seconded to marketing as Product Development Manager.

## Olde Art Retires

### Brisbane Bureau Loses Famous Yachting Writer

Along with the smell of frying bacon from the Queensland Newspapers canteen, the rumbling in the air conditioning ducts and the sounds of Gil Breitreutz singing "It's a big, wide, wonderful world," Arthur Seaman has been a part of the AAP Brisbane newsroom since before it became the AAP Brisbane newsroom.

But "uncle Artie" has retired and, in shock at the thought of it, Lorann Downer has also left AAP. Before she did, she penned these words which summed up the feelings of all who worked with him:

*"Olde Art works here", reads the sign underneath favoured newspaper caricatures stuck on the wall beside the operators' desk in the AAP Brisbane Bureau.*

But Art doesn't work here anymore and he is greatly missed by his colleagues.

After suffering a heart ailment in February, Arthur Seaman took time off to await an operation and has decided since to retire two years short of his 65th birthday after 30 years with the company.

In keeping with a family tradition of working in the print media, Arthur started work with Queensland Regional News Service in 1963 and moved to AAP when it acquired that service in 1975.

Brisbane racing editor Glenn Davis recalled that soon after Arthur arrived at QRNS from England, he was drafted into The Courier-Mail's soccer team "The Headliners".

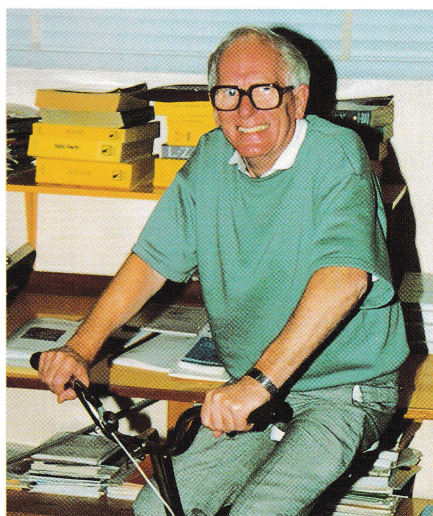
"Being a Pom they thought naturally he would be a soccer player. I was only a kid and played with him, filling in because they couldn't field a side. He was no Pele," said Glenn.

"When he first came to work here he arrived in open-toed sandals, with thick woollen socks, a cloth cap on his head and fish and chips under his arm," Brisbane joker Gil Breitreutz unreliably reported.

Arthur is well-loved by his co-workers, as much for his Goonish sense of humour as his calm and competence when copy-taking. Invariably, he would pick up and correct spelling or syntax errors.

"When you were working under pressure, when you had to phone in copy, it was always great to hear Arty's voice on the other end of the phone," Brisbane sports editor Wayne Heming said.

Former AAP staffer Jan Martin said she had never filed copy by telephone before joining AAP in 1984. "If it had not been for Arthur I would never have got through my first six months of filing radio copy," she said.



Arthur Seaman powers up the Brisbane computers. The exercise bike belongs to Bureau Chief Paul Reid who says he never used it, so he brought it into the office, "where it is not used either. It says something about the fitness levels of AAP Brisbane journalists or the functionality of exercise bikes, or both", he said.

Whenever an anxious journo ringing through copy asked how the story looked, Arthur's standard dead-pan response was: "I don't like your intro."

Arthur made it into print himself a couple of years ago after he had taken a casual contributor's copy on a yachting event.

Someone in Sydney asked whose initials were at the end of the story and the yarn hit the wires by-lined to Arthur.

He still blushes when reminded of his 15 seconds of fame as Arthur Seaman, yachting correspondent.

When re-runs of old Goon shows were played on radio, Arthur would spend his shift laughing heartily at the lines we're sure he knew off by heart.

He still bears a trace of an accent from his native Newcastle and loves a good cup of tea.

"The epitome of the word gentleman," Brisbane bureau chief Paul Reid said of Arthur.

And he is a gentleman, who took an interest in his co-workers, who cheered us when we had the blues and was a good friend.

"Arthur Seaman gives whingeing Poms a bad name," Wayne said.

Very much a family man, Arthur often talked about his wife Eleanor, their children and grandchildren.

He is involved with his church, taking Sunday school lessons and helping put on stage productions, and is a friend and helper to those less fortunate than him.

## Minister to Launch TravelNet Service

*Tourism Minister Michael Lee is to launch AAP's new TravelNet service which provides real-time airline flight arrival and departure information.*

The launch is scheduled for Monday, May 31, at the Darling Harbour Convention Centre.

TravelNet allows airline travellers to check the latest arrival and departure times of any flight – domestic or international – without the need to call an airline.

It provides access through a PC to real-time information which is constantly updated by the major airlines as aircraft arrive, depart or are rescheduled.

David Jensen, General Manager Corporate and Media Services, said TravelNet had taken several years to develop and now contained a wealth of very useful and timely information.

It was designed for use by hotels, motels, taxi companies, hire car operators, freight forwarders and any other organisation requiring access to the latest airline schedules.

"It is just like reading the arrival and departure boards in the airline terminals," he said.

"We believe that eventually TravelNet will become a standard product in hotels for their guests. It removes the need to call busy airline offices to check a flight. This can now be done in seconds on a PC.

"Later, TravelNet will also provide airline timetables and other travel information."

The service is the first of its kind in the world and is regarded as a major step forward in the servicing of Australia's tourism and aviation industries.

TravelNet provides data on all Ansett and Ansett subsidiary airlines including East West, Ansett Express, Ansett WA, Kendall and Aeropelican, as well as Australian Airlines and its subsidiaries.

Qantas is contributing real-time data on all its flights together with the arrival and departure times for all other international carriers operating into Australia.

Commonwealth Cars have installed the service in nine offices around Australia and it is also operating in hotels in Sydney and Perth.

The airline industry has fully endorsed the product as it will allow them to free up staff and reduce telephone traffic associated with flight arrival and departure enquiries.

Subscribers access the information on a PC, which is connected to AAP's central database. Retrieval is instant and data constantly updated on the screen as it is received from the airlines' central computer systems.

## **A** Adventure Training Course Helps Build Team Spirit

Paddling out into Sydney Harbour on a raft made of old oil drums was just one of the many activities undertaken to build team spirit in Customer Services.

Andrew Meagher reports that with the theme of turning learning into experience, staff spent the day being confronted with problems and learning how to work together to solve them.

The problems ranged from passing a ball around a circle of eight in under one second to deconstructing and rebuilding a one metre blue metal machine in just one minute.

In all cases, the same key process was being stressed – the need to identify the problem and the available resources to solve it, the sharing of ideas on how the group should work together, then implementation of the plan and finally, an assessment of how successful the attempt had been.

The one-day Adventure Training course on Berry Island Reserve at Wollstonecraft gave staff the opportunity to work together outside the office and forge trusts which the pressures of normal work do not allow time to develop.

From the start of the day, this was evident in the walks around the island with one staff member blindfolded and another giving directions. Only two people were led on kamikaze courses with trees.

The course, run by Adventure Education Pty Ltd, was taken by Customer Services in two groups and by Computer Operations and Andrew says both have benefited by being able to apply the skills they learnt back to their everyday work.



*The raft under construction with left to right Iain Walker, Grant Liptrot, Ramsin Shamon, Leah Corby, Rania Hazinikitas, Paul Bland and Jeff Rollason.*



*Grant Liptrot (left) and Jeff Rollason on the raft in Sydney Harbour.*

## **S** Staff Suggestions Program

*AAP staff have responded well to the Customer Services suggestion program with ideas flowing in from all areas of the company – but more are needed.*

The leading contributor is Pitt Street based field technician Steve Goozee, who has submitted a barrage of possible changes and improvements.

“The program gives staff who have ideas on how things can be improved a forum,” program co-ordinator Sally Bryant said.

“We’ve noticed many good suggestions are simple changes which allow us to provide a better service to our clients. They show we need to be open minded and responsive.”

A couple of suggestions already adopted are reserved parking for staff working shifts at Glebe and interdepartmental presentations to help improve understanding of how the company works.

Quarterly awards will be presented for the best suggestions received, with the first of these to be announced shortly.

Sally, who can be contacted at Glebe on extension 1054, stressed that suggestions were being sought on all aspects of AAP’s operations, not just the Customer Services department.

## **F**ree News Service at State Library of NSW

*The State Library of New South Wales is making its AAP NewsTrack news service available to the public free of charge for a one-month introductory period.*

NewsTrack, which provides up-to-the-minute coverage of world and national news, finance and sport via personal computer, was installed at the State Library last month.

State Librarian Alison Crook, Bulletin magazine Business Woman of the Year, said, “We see NewsTrack as another of the library’s important information services. People do want to have the news and they want it to be current.

“The NewsTrack service quite clearly gets across the message that we are dealing with up

to date information. It is not just historical information, but current information and the latest information.”

Ms Crook said that more and more business people were now using the State Library for its conference facilities and for its unmatched information resources, particularly since it had installed CD-ROM services.

“We are hoping that NewsTrack will help lead them into more extensive use of our on-line databases. It is straight-forward and easy to use and very professionally presented.

“It is also a useful resource for overseas students and tourists seeking news from home.” The NewsTrack service is available in the

General Reference Library on Level 7. The State Library is also installing NewsScan in the Macquarie Street foyer later this month.



*State Librarian Alison Crook.*

In the first of a regular series on members of the AAP Executive Committee, we profile **Barney Blundell, 54, General Manager Group Communications.**

## **F**ield Service Engineer Who Moved Buildings and Helped Change Australian Communications

*Communications deregulation and building moves are what stand out when Barney Blundell looks back over his 24 years with AAP.*

Barney can fairly lay claim to being AAP's technical and communications guru and the man who has led the company step by step to its present strong position in that fast-growing industry.

Throughout it all, he has never lost his larrikin sense of humour, and has remained approachable to all despite the succession of senior positions he has held.

He is a regular at the monthly AAP social golf days, where he plays off a handicap of 19, often teaming up with one of his three sons, who learned to play the game at those outings along with the children of several other staff members.

His golf and his other keen sporting interests, including rugby, basketball, jujitsu (he holds a black belt), swimming and tennis have kept him fit and looking younger than his years.

Barney joined AAP at Wynyard House in May, 1969, as a computer engineer, but almost didn't.

"I remember arriving for a temporary job helping to 'install' a computer and looking through a window into a grotty newsroom," he said.

"I decided that was not the place for me and was on my way to the lifts when the Reuter seconded engineer Norm Radford stopped me and took me to the computer room with a promise that I would never have to work on the editorial floor."

Barney says the highlight of his early days with AAP was the mining boom of the late 1960s and early 1970s when the Stockmaster electronic stock pricing service was introduced to Australia.

"We couldn't get the equipment into brokers' rooms fast enough," he said

But retribution was swift if a dealer fell behind in his payments. Barney recalls the time two AAP staffers were to recover the terminal from a client who had gone broke but was unwilling to give it up.

"There was a tug of war with our men trying to carry the terminal out of the office and the client holding on to the leads. Bob Gleeson

(now a construction engineer with AAPT) reached out with his pliers and cut the cable."

Barney was appointed AAP's Technical Manager in 1971 and Assistant General Manager (Technical Services) in 1980, and has been a major player in the moves towards deregulation of the communications industry in Australia from the early 1970s.

AAP was then the first to use private multiplexers on Telecom networks and Barney lists among his other formidable achievements, overall technical responsibility for:

- establishment of the present AAP financial quotation retrieval networks
- AAP's picture facsimile network
- on-line automated typesetting of stock market and horse racing services
- editorial video-editing systems.
- time division multiplexing on international and domestic communications networks, and
- the setting up of AAP's satellite network for regional newspapers.

In 1984, Barney was appointed to establish the subsidiary company, AAP Reuters Communications, which led ultimately to AAP's major thrust into the telecommunications arena, where it is now a leading player.

He made the initial contacts with the MCI Corporation of the US, which resulted in the division of the communications group into AAP Telecommunications (AAPT) – a joint venture with MCI and the Todd Corporation of New Zealand and AAP Communications Services (AAPCS).

Barney's present role is to plan new AAP ventures in the communications area.

As part of this, he instigated business plans for a third cellular mobile telephone network and negotiated AAP's current position with Vodafone Pty Ltd which late last year was awarded the third cellular mobile licence.

He is vice president of the Federation of Australian Narrowcasters and has been a member of the board of the Australian Telecommunications Users Group (ATUG) for the past seven years. As Chairman of its Policy Committee, he has been responsible for many initiatives that have helped influence the Federal government towards deregulation.

This culminated in the 1991 Telecommunications Act which merged Telecom and OTC into AOTC and introduced competition with Optus as the second carrier.



*Barney Blundell.*

It has also, said Barney, provided AAP with the freedom to play a virtually unlimited role in communications, except for "putting wires in the ground or launching our own satellites."

His current responsibilities as General Manager include lobbying and negotiating with all levels of government on telecommunications and trade legislation.

He investigates and assesses new long term communications business opportunities in Australia and overseas, maintains contacts in the communications industry for all companies in the AAP Group, provides sales leads, chairs and speaks at seminars and acts as spokesman on communications issues.

He helps plan AAP's voice and data communications needs and serves on the AAP Building Committee, which recently completed a major building move in Melbourne.

Barney negotiated the purchase of the Glebe Technical Centre building at 30 Ross Street as the hub for news, information and communications traffic in 1984 for \$862,000 and a further \$4.5 million was spent outfitting it. It is now estimated to be worth almost double that investment.

He was responsible for the establishment of a 120-earth station satellite network, including five major capital city earth stations, to provide services to regional areas in the four eastern states as well as capital city clients.

A microwave distribution system (MDS) he helped establish as an alternative to Telecom local lines was networked to over 1,000 buildings in the five mainland state capitals.

He also introduced the Aspen voice messaging system, commenced a PictureTel videoconferencing agency and acquired Hughes



and Skyswitch satellite equipment agency agreements.

Barney joined AAP after 15 years with the RAAF, where he specialised in telecommunications, including electronic test equipment, high power HF transmitters and ground based navigation aids.

He was a guided missile instructor at RAAF Kingswood and also served at Frognall, Butterworth in Malaysia, Laverton and at HQ Support Command in Canberra.

He is now the longest serving senior technical person at AAP.

Looking back over his career, Barney recalls the move from Wynyard House, AAP's first Sydney headquarters, to Sussex Street as an intensive effort.

"We worked day and night for many months," he said. "All existing services had to be kept going, we had to design the new building layout, rehouse each service and install and train staff on the first video editing system in Australia at the same time.

"My wife said she would have divorced me except she was too embarrassed to cite AAP as the co-respondent."

The major part of the move was made on Good Friday, 1974. The key piece of equipment was the Tatpac multiplexer, which linked AAP to the rest of the world. It was one of only six worldwide and there were no spare units.

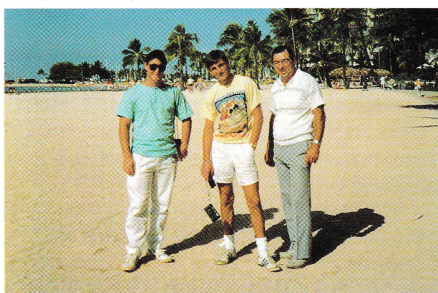
At one stage Barney and his staff looked like being forced to wheel it through the deserted city streets when the back lifter on the removal truck broke down.

It was eventually installed at 364 Sussex Street with a total outage of only six hours.

Another major accomplishment was the move to the new Melbourne office at 530 Collins Street last year—clearly the biggest in terms of staff and equipment, but less traumatic than the Sussex Street move.

Barney probably got to know Telecom better than anyone not actually working for the organisation.

"I guess I have always been fighting Telecom headquarters to meet AAP's financial and technical objectives," he said.



*Barney Blundell pictured on the beach at Waikiki with his sons Steven and Glenn.*



*Barney Blundell shows the satellite dishes at Glebe to Mr Mu Qing, who recently retired as President of China's Xinhua News Agency, and Mr Lu Hao-Feng of Xinhua's Foreign Affairs Department in Beijing.*

"I battled for two years to get the first multiplexer into Australia. It took me a further 18 months to win permission to put silent printers in the newsroom, which at that time had 114 Siemens mechanical printers operating.

"They were arranged in racks and the noise level was like standing on a busy street corner," he said.

One of his chief adversaries in Telecom for many years was Brian Perkins, now Director, Regulatory Affairs, with AAPT.

While relations with the communications giant were sometimes strained, AAP has always had excellent relations with OTC (now joined with Telecom as AOTC) thanks in part to the colourful Wagga Wagga sporting weekends, held annually since 1948.

It began as a cricket challenge between the OTC offices in Sydney and Melbourne with AAP presenting the prize for the winning team.

"Wagga was chosen as the halfway point between the two cities and most participants then arrived by train, bringing with them—at least in the early days—their own kegs of beer." Telecom and other major communications users soon joined in and the weekend has developed into a top-level industry contact and social gathering. Wives and family members are now invited and the range of sports broadened to include tennis, golf, bowls and snooker.

Olympic and Commonwealth Games have provided some memorable moments when Barney and others had to resort to unorthodox means to get AAP's services up and running.

"At the Montreal Olympics, when Canada's national carrier Teleglobe went on strike, Reuters engineer Dredge Liversedge snuck into their building to connect our communications for the games," Barney said. "Glenn Smith reciprocated at Los Angeles in 1984 when he was largely responsible for getting both the AAP and Reuters communications up on time."

But perhaps the most unusual moment came in the lead-up to the Christchurch games in 1974 when Barney was sent out to the TAA bond store at Mascot to locate a Muirhead picture converter that had gone missing.

It was an essential piece of equipment for picture transmission from New Zealand and

TAA, despite repeated entreaties, were unable to find it.

"(The then General Manager) Duncan Hooper told me to dress in my best suit and hire a Rolls Royce," said Barney.

"He told me to arrive at the store like I owned the place and have a good look round for myself. I did as he suggested and TAA let me in without a murmur. I found the equipment and managed to get it on a plane in time for the games."

Barney says that Duncan was never lacking in advice and he remembers several of his aphorisms that have stood the test of time.

They include:

"Never write a letter in anger. Put it away in a drawer for a day or two then redraft it."

"Inundate public servants with paper. They have to keep it all on file."

"If you are not getting anywhere with someone, go and look them in the eye across the desk."

Barney says he has been blessed with two outstanding secretaries – Denise Johnson, who was his secretary for eight years and is now married to Glenn Smith, and his current secretary of four years, Joan Neilson.

Looking to the future, Barney says that AAP is likely to concentrate more on radio-based communications solutions, in the ultra high frequency (UHF) spectrum.

A lot of this work will flow naturally into AAP's current push into Asia, where there is a scarcity of reliable terrestrial links. That push will be concentrated on China, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand.

Barney is currently working on high-tech radio communications solutions for the credit and security markets, building on the present credit card transaction systems.

AAP has also proposed to the Federal government a combination of satellite and MDS as the most economic way to distribute PAY TV in some 100 regional centres around Australia.

"We have talked with all the prospective proponents of PAY TV," he says. "Our interest is in provision of equipment, network design and ongoing maintenance."

Barney believes AAP's involvement with the third mobile telephone licence will prove to be one of its most exciting ventures.

And he remains deeply involved in the company's planning for 1997, when total deregulation is due to occur and additional carriers – perhaps including an AAP consortium – may emerge to compete with AOTC and Optus.

## AAP Ironman Keen to Qualify for World Titles

**Ironman Brad Weier is out of bed at 3.45 most mornings to fit in the heavy training schedule he requires to compete in triathlons around a full time job.**

**Brad, 32, returned a personal best performance in the Australian Ironman Triathlon Championship, held as round two of the world series, at Forster on the New South Wales Central Coast on April 4**

The event consisted of a 3.8 km swim, a 180 km cycle leg and a 42.2 km run.

He completed the swim in 53 mins 54 secs, the ride in 5 hours 14 mins 13 secs and the run in 4 hours 32 mins 55 secs.

His total time was 10 hours 41 mins 2 secs and he was placed 224th overall out of 761 competitors. "My target was to go under 12 hours so I was very pleased with that result," said Brad, who has competed in more than 20 similar events.

Brad, NSW Operations Manager, Client Systems, for AAP Communications Services, will contest the triathlon run over the shorter, Olympic Games distance for AAP at the Corporate Games at Darling Harbour on May 8.

"I'm not looking forward to the swim leg," he said. "I've been in Darling Harbour before and it's pretty oily and horrible."

His goal next year is to complete the ironman event in under 10 hours in an attempt to qualify for the world championships in Hawaii.

Brad's training schedule consists of swimming 8-10 kms a week, running 70-80 kms over six days and cycling eight kms to and from work every day with one long ride of about 160 kms at weekends.

He got started in the sport three years ago when his gym instructor was getting together a team to compete in triathlons. He was then cycling to work from Kogarah, 20 kms each way, and had been a keen swimmer as a child and looked forward to getting back into competition.

"I've never been much of a runner, but unfortunately that's an important part of the triathlon," said Brad, who is also in training for the Gold Coast Marathon in July, the only marathon event he runs each year.

Fitting in the training he needs to do around a full time job is not easy.

"I'm out of bed at 3.45 a.m. to get into it. I try to train in two disciplines every day. The professionals of course are able to devote a lot more time to their training," he said.

"But it's a good way to keep fit, and I'd be keen to talk to anyone else at AAP who is interested in taking up the event."



*Brad Weier with his wife Pauline after finishing the Forster Triathlon.*

## Big Bike Ride Raises Funds for MS

**The four AAP riders in the RTA Big New South Wales Bike Ride raised a total of \$3,850 for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.**

The ride this year was over nine days from Port Macquarie to Darling Harbour, covering a total of 540 kilometres.

Most of the money raised was from workmates at AAP with more than 200 people pledging so many cents per kilometre or a fixed amount for the journey.

Dennis Riepon, now a veteran of several rides, said the group had stayed together well throughout the journey except on the last stage into Sydney when Max Gerlach had mysteriously disappeared.

It transpired that, deep in conversation with two girls from Reuters, he had missed a turn and had to backtrack. The trio eventually arrived about an hour behind the main group.

Max said the ride had been an experience he would never forget.



*Pictured from left to right is the AAP team of Martin Finnis, Technical Services Group, Dave Morrissey, Computer Operations, Dennis Riepon, Technical Development and Max Gerlach, Data Control.*

"It was good fun. I had my doubts about lasting the distance because I had never done any cycling before, so it was a big achievement for me."

Organisers said that some 1,500 riders took part in the event and the amount raised was expected to total close to \$200,000.

## Hole in One to Garry Anderson

**Garry Anderson joined golf's exclusive hole-in-one club in great style recently, holing out in front of four club professionals.**

Garry, playing at his home course, Marrickville, cracked a five wood off the tee at the testing 180-metre eighth hole.

The green is out of sight over the top of a hill and the four pros were still putting out when his ball rolled across the green and into the hole.

"It was at our Tuesday Open Day which usually draws a good field including a few of the club professionals," Garry said.

"I'd taken the day off work. Yes, I had my leave application in."

Garry had 43 points for the round off his 21 handicap.

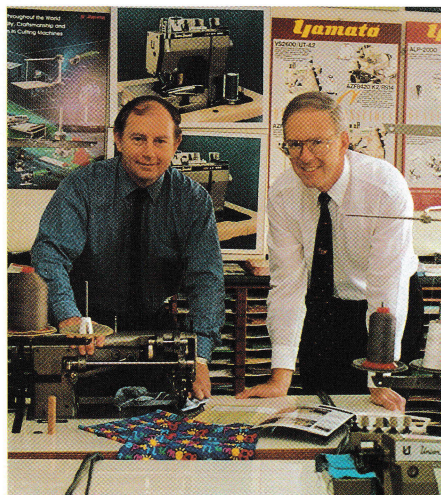
"The funny thing is I'd gone very close on the same hole the week before," he said, but conceded that Marrickville, with its 12 par 3s, does provide more opportunities than most courses for a hole in one.

## Quick Response Earns Customer in Record Time

The value of a quick, professional response to a service enquiry was graphically illustrated by AAPT Telecommunications staff last month.

The caller happened to be the chairman of a national trading company and he was so impressed with their efficiency that he had signed up as a FirstChoice customer within an hour of his original call.

His enquiry on the Customers Relations Centre 008 number was fielded by supervisor Kerry-Ann Meredith, whose promise to have a sales representative ring straight back was greeted with some cynicism.



*James Angus and John Greig of Capron Carter.*

Kerry-Ann immediately rang Scott Chambers in sales who called the potential client right away, and on ascertaining he was located in Camperdown, near AAPT's Glebe headquarters, arranged an appointment for 10 minutes later.

The caller was James Angus, Chairman of Capron Carter, importers of industrial sewing machines and other clothing industry equipment, which has offices in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide and customers in all states.

"We were looking to make savings on our telephone costs," Mr Angus said. "We'd heard talk of AAPT within the industry. I called them up and things moved very quickly from there.

"We were most impressed with the way it was presented to us. We have 41 staff Australia-wide and we call interstate continuously.

"We're still in that period where costs are uppermost in everyone's minds, and we're looking at savings of up to \$10,000 a year,

or around 15 per cent of current billing."

Company Director John Greig said Capron Carter had looked at call monitoring systems and spoken with other communications providers before contacting AAPT.

"AAPT provided the better overall alternative," he said.

"We will receive one statement a month with graphs to indicate usage patterns. The reporting and detailed analysis we receive will enable us to make further savings. A lot of our calls fall into the range where you make maximum savings.

"We also have 11 mobile telephones around the country and we're looking at savings there too later in the year."

Capron Carter is a family company started by the grandfather of James and his brother Lorance Angus, the Managing Director, and sister Katherine Anderson, who are its only three shareholders.

Lorance Carter started the company in 1912 with a Mr Capron, about whom very little else is known. They began by importing cigars and human hair for wigs and quickly progressed to larger items including go-karts, refrigerator and motorbike parts and even cars.

The specialisation in its current line began in 1918 with the import of industrial sewing machines from England. It operated from various premises in the CBD before moving to its large premises on Parramatta Road at Camperdown in 1971.

Capron Carter imports a wide range of machines for all sections of the clothing trade – including industrial sewing machines, fusing presses, cutting machines, cloth spreaders, right through to computerised lay planning equipment for fashion design.

These and other specialised items including seat stitching machines for the car industry are imported from Japan, the US and Taiwan with none manufactured locally.

They have a showroom and warehouse, where they assemble the stands to house the machinery, a service and repairs department and spare parts for most makes and models.

## AAPT Signs Up First WA Client

*AAPT Telecommunications has become the first telephone company to offer an alternative to Telecom for long distance business communications in Perth.*

The move has given Perth-based businesses the chance to save up to 30 per cent on their STD bills in a state where the cost of phone and data communications to the eastern states has been a major handicap.

Ironically, AAPT's first WA-based customer is a firm of Perth telecommunications consultants which sells products such as call management and voicecall systems and advises businesses on telecommunications solutions.

Maximum Communications (Maxicom) has chosen AAPT's FirstChoice service to handle all its interstate and overseas phone traffic.

Managing Director Rod Van Gas believes it will save his company around \$2,000 a year in operating costs.

"We have relatively high long distance call traffic despite our small staff number. Most of our equipment suppliers are on the east coast, which means communications costs have been quite high," he said.

"Our expertise in telecommunications meant that it was easy to weigh up the advantages of switching to AAPT."

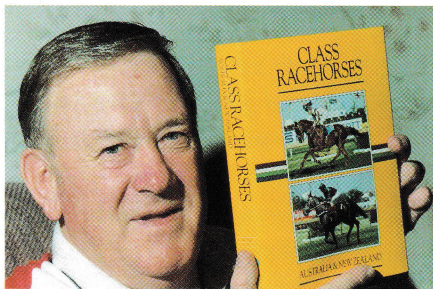


*Pictured above are some of the staff members who helped ensure that the annual AAP Reuters Finance Cup Regatta in Perth in February was a highly successful event. They are (back row) Jayne Long, executive assistant in the Perth office, Merrimee Smith, account executive, RES, Harry Dillema, National Sales Manager, RES (front row) Bill Bowen, Group Manager Western Australia, Kerrie Mews, RES customer liaison executive and Liz Cornelissen, National Client Relations Manager. For the first time this year, the number of sailors topped the 100 mark and the event was won by the Commonwealth Bank crew.*

## Racing Services Prize Lightened the Handicap

Former Sydney first grade rugby league player Bernie Nevin's life came crashing down around him on Boxing Day in 1978 when a swimming pool accident left him a quadriplegic.

But showing the dedication which enabled him to make the top grade in one of Australia's toughest sports, Mr Nevin defied medical opinion in a four-year rehabilitation which sees him now able to get around by himself, albeit with crutches.



Bernie Nevin

"I was told I'd never, ever walk again", Mr Nevin, 55, said from his Warilla home on the New South Wales south coast.

"I broke my neck when I jumped into the shallow end of my outdoor pool.

"But I reckon I get more trouble now from old football injuries — a crook knee, arthritis — than the accident," he said as prepared for the weekend he described as a "bloody beauty".

The weekend, on which he was joined by his wife and son, was Mr Nevin's prize in the AAP Racing Services draw for buyers of Volume Nine of Class Racehorses of Australia and New Zealand.

He had the choice of attending major autumn race meetings in Melbourne or Auckland, but chose the Golden Slipper and BMW race day at Rosehill because his injuries make air travel uncomfortable.

Racing Services ensured the Nevins did it in style, being picked up from and returned home in a limousine and staying two nights at The Regent of Sydney.

He and his family attended the Slipper as guests of the Sydney Turf Club and he also received \$500 in betting money.

"I've been a punter all my life," said Mr Nevin who played grade for Newtown in the late 1950s and early '60s.

He actually bought the new Class Racehorses for his son Stephen, 30, and was so impressed he later purchased the other eight volumes.

## NewsTrack User Celebrated in Song

*One of NewsTrack's greatest fans has had his attachment to the service remembered in lyrics to no less than three songs by his work colleagues.*

Medianet Manager Rex Mitchell reports that when staff at The Rowland Company, an international public relations consultancy group, celebrated Kevin Hilferty's 20 years with their Australian operation, they were moved to mark the occasion with song.

Some samples:

He reads our news and the AAP,  
He loves a joke and the ABC, and

There's not a whisper of news that he'll miss,  
Not a word from the old AAP, and

The king of papers and the AAP,  
Kev Hilferty, Kev Hilferty.

Rex says Kevin, who is very well known in Sydney PR circles, is the most dedicated NewsTrack user he knows and The Rowland Company (formerly Neilson McCarthy and Partners) has been one of the top-performing consultancies over many years.

## Corporate Games

*AAP had a total of 33 competitors taking part in the first Australian Corporate Games held in and around Darling Harbour in May.*

They took part in tennis, touch football, triathlon and soccer.

Participants ranged from Chief Executive Lee Casey and Craig McIvor, Manager, AAP Reuters Economic Services, in the tennis to Brad Weier and Brendan Harvey in the gruelling triathlon.

We will have reports on how they fared in the next issue.

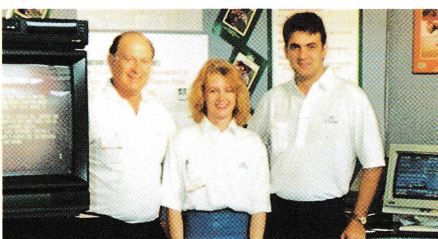
A total of 1,200 people from 70 companies registered to compete.

## A Promotional Plus

**FastForm Plus, the latest product from AAP Racing Services, has won ready acceptance from existing clients and helped bolster promotional activities.**

It proved a winner at on-course displays at the Brambles Classic meeting at Kembla Grange, at race days at Warwick Farm and Canterbury and at the First National Horse Expo held at Flemington racecourse in Melbourne in March.

The three-day expo drew a crowd of 25,000 with seminars, auctions and public displays complementing the large trade show at which most major industry organisations were represented.



Geoff Want, Michele Cullen and Craig Dick

Sydney staff Michele Cullen and Craig Dick, along with Amanda James from the Melbourne office, were kept busy providing information on AAP's form and breeding databases, and Geoff Want, Director Racing Services, said it had been well worth the effort.

"It is no idle boast that AAP has the best and most complete racing information services and this was an ideal opportunity to show the products in Melbourne.

"FastForm Plus has added a new dimension to the product range as the software really helps present the form data in the best possible way. Prospects can readily see the benefits of the total FastForm package, which makes it just that much easier to sell the products," he said.

Data can be viewed on the computer screen, exported to spreadsheets, manipulated, updated, and there is a "black book" where clients enter their own comments on horses to follow and the system checks the acceptances for each meeting to find when they are running.

# Front Line Customer Field Service a Demanding Task

**Colin Akers is the man in the hot seat, responsible for the satisfaction of several major clients as Customer Field Services Manager for Victoria.**

His group carries out the installation and maintenance of all AAP Group products, except for those of AAPT, in Victoria and Tasmania, and a growing range of third party services.

Products they support include microwave, multiplexing modems, small dish satellite and



*Colin Akers.*

the Octel voice messaging, Picturetel video conferencing, and the full range of AAP Reuters Economic Services products.

"He has a diverse and demanding job," says Jeffrey Roll, General Manager Customer Field Services.

"One of his tasks is to consolidate support for RES clients including the major dealing rooms of the National Australia Bank and ANZ in Melbourne. They are high profile players who demand a very high level of technical and customer service."

Akers, 36, is a professional manager with a technical background who understands the importance of client relationships, rather than the old-style technical manager.

His staff of 18 also support a wide range of AAPIS and AAPCS clients, and provide third party maintenance for outside companies.

A subsidiary company of AAPCS, Integrated Cabling Services (ICS), is responsible for building power and communications cabling, an important value-added service offered to new and existing clients.

Most of his technical staff now operate out of the new Melbourne headquarters at 530 Collins Street, which is ideally located to serve as the fast response centre for dealing with key business clients, especially the RES trading and dealing room clients.

AAPCS's South Melbourne premises, now primarily a store, is being ramped up to become a full blown workshop for third party maintenance, an equipment repair facility, and the ICS headquarters, being far more suitable for these purposes than the Collins Street office.

"Our business is undergoing changes and becoming more exciting," Colin says.

"We have just added a salesman to promote new-name business, in the area of network solutions and third party maintenance.

"We will build on the reputation we have for quality service and reliability."

Akers came to AAPCS after 18 years in the computer industry with Honeywell and Prime, where he served as state and regional manager for their service business.

He started as a cadet customer service engineer with Honeywell and progressed through operations, programming, equipment room design and the full range of field service activities before moving into management.

On the way he gained a certificate of technology in electronics and a graduate diploma in management from the RMIT.

"I am very impressed with the company", he says of AAPCS. "Most companies in the service business would give their eye teeth for the customer base we have.

"AAPCS has its strategy defined and we are very clearly focussed. We also have a very good reputation among the people who know us. One of the challenges now is to become more widely known in the marketplace.

"Given that we can raise our profile, the prospects for the future are very exciting.

## Old and New Faces in Melbourne Newsroom

*Two old faces are among five "new" faces in the Melbourne newsroom.*

Mike Hedge, formerly a Melbourne racing and sports reporter, has returned to the newsroom as deputy bureau chief after three years heading the Perth bureau.

It is Mike's third posting in Melbourne. In a varied 14-year career with AAP, he has also worked on the Sydney sports desk and spent three years in the London bureau.

The other old face to rejoin the office is sports reporter Jeff Turnbull. He spent 10 years with AAP — working as a sport and general news reporter in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and London — before resigning in 1989 to learn newspaper sub-editing.

Jeff is pleased to be "back in the AAP family".

"AAP offers a lot more opportunities than I ever had in newspapers," he says.

Like Mike and Jeff, new Melbourne recruit Sandra McKay also has London experience.

A general news reporter, Sandra has worked on Victorian weekly and daily papers as well as a 10-month stint as a sub-editor on the London Evening Standard.

Fergus Shiel, a reporter who joined the bureau late last year, also has a varied background. A graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, he has worked on papers in his native Ireland, as well as in Sydney and Ballarat.

Louise Robson, another new staffer who was absent when the picture was taken, entered journalism after working in a series of government positions in Melbourne and London. With a degree from the University of Sussex and a Diploma of Journalism from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, she came to AAP after a stint as a reporter with the Macedon Ranges Telegraph, a weekly paper just out of Melbourne.



*Fergus Shiel, Mike Hedge, Sandra McKay and Jeff Turnbull.*

## Applause for Kerry-Ann and a Role in Les Mis



**Kerry-Ann Meredith pictured backstage with Sue Nash, a fellow member of the chorus line of Applause, performed by the Miranda Musical Society.**

Kerry-Ann has been with the company for three years and has appeared in a range of musicals including Oliver, Pippin, Anything Goes and Mame, in which she played the role of Sally Cato.

But the big news is that she is now auditioning to play one of the seven lovely ladies in the

society's most adventurous production yet – the New South Wales non-professional theatre premiere of Les Miserables.

Miranda's production of Les Mis will cost at least \$80,000 to stage and will run at the Sutherland Entertainment Centre from September 22 to October 2.

And already 40 of Kerry-Ann's workmates have lined up for tickets.

"The support I have had from people here is tremendous," she said. "About 20 of them came to see Applause and there is even talk of hiring a bus for the next show. The part I hope to win is a singing and dancing role."

Kerry-Ann has had a long-term love of show business. Ten years ago she was a singer with the rock band Stormy Monday, which is still around, "though they've changed their format."

She also performed as a mainly jazz-style singer at Sydney restaurants.

"I love it", Kerry-Ann said of her involvement with the Miranda society. "It is good to have

a hobby where you can be something else. It provides an added dimension."

Kerry-Ann, Customer Relations Supervisor with AAP Telecommunications, said that tickets for Les Mis go on sale on Bastille Day – July 14.

Doug Nicholson, President of the Miranda Musical Society, said that Australia had been given the amateur theatre rights for Les Miserables ahead of the United States and Europe.

Miranda had been beaten to the Australian premiere by 10 days by a group in Cairns and a long queue of musical societies around the country will perform it over the next two years.

"But ours will be the benchmark production", he said. "It will give our company the ability to show off its talents and our production team – who are regarded as being among the very best – an opportunity to show what non-professional theatre can do."

Ticket prices range from \$16 to \$20 with concessions for theatre parties.

## Health and Safety Committee



*The committee's employee members (pictured from centre) are Shani Keane (chairperson) from Editorial, System Support engineer Hugo Barker, and Carmel Sparke from Editorial and (left foreground) RDS and Dealing 2000 administrator Louise Edmeades.*

*Management is represented by (from the left) Properties and Facilities Manager Graeme Mercer, Editorial Manager John Radovan, Group Human Resources Manager Neil Hope and Personnel Manager Linda Ward, the committee secretary (right foreground).*

**Pictured left is the Occupational Health and Safety Committee at its March meeting.**

The committee, which has an equal representation of employees and management, investigates, monitors and makes recommendations on health and safety matters.

Chairperson Shani Keane said the committee needs the active co-operation of all managers, supervisors and staff.

"Anyone can raise any concerns about health and safety in the workplace with any member of the committee", Shani said.

"The legislation gives the committee members broad authority to carry out inspections, but we aren't taking over the day to day responsibilities of managers and supervisors.

"They should still be alerted whenever a problem comes up and the committee will need their reports on what action was taken."

## Keystone Cops on the Central Coast

**Moving from Sydney to the NSW Central Coast does not guarantee a more peaceful existence as Andrew Pritchard found one morning recently.**

His car was stolen and used in the early morning robbery of the Davistown RSL Club.

The first Andrew knew of it was when he was woken at 4.30 am by two police officers demanding to know if he was the owner of a white Commodore.

"I told them I had an '89 Calais and that it was in the driveway," he said.

"Perhaps it was the pleased expression on my face when they showed me the empty driveway," said Andrew, who had been planning to sell the car to help finance the purchase of a house.

"But they were very suspicious and carted me off to Terrigal police station for questioning."

Andrew was driven back home by the chief of detectives after he established his identity and told them he worked for AAP, who, he said, would be interested in getting the first break on the robbery story.

His car did not fare so well.

The thieves threw away his child safety chairs, ripped out the back seat to stack their booty from the RSL, wrecked his dashboard and punctured a tyre.

But the worst damage was caused by the caretaker at the RSL club who, alerted by the alarm system, rushed out swinging a baseball bat and attacked the car as it drove off, smashing

the windscreen and denting the bodywork.

Total damage to the vehicle was still being assessed.

The robbers, who made off with several thousand dollars in cash and goods, were last seen heading off from Saratoga in a boat in the direction of Woy Woy.

Andrew doubts they will ever be caught. His detective-driver appeared to think the six dead matchsticks he picked up from Andrew's driveway where the car had been parked was a significant clue.

It was, said Andrew, Product Support Executive with AAPIS, a rude welcome home after a week in Adelaide setting up communications for the PANPA Conference.

## Some Tips on Drinking From the Grand Old Man of Grange

*What was the very best vintage of Grange Hermitage, how should you decant it and when is it best drunk?*

The answers to these questions and many other fascinating insights into Australia's premier red wine were provided by its creator, Max Schubert, at a lunch for AAP executives last month.

Penfolds has been a major supporter of the AAP Group Financial Markets Len Evans Charity Golf Event, which has raised a total of \$3.5 million for leading Australian charities since 1987.

Two complete collections of Grange Hermitage have been among the most popular auction items at the fund raising dinners and the one which went under the hammer this year had the added attraction of all bottles being signed by the 76-year-old Schubert.

Penfolds Wine Group General Manager Ian Mackley had invited Chief Executive Lee Casey and General Manager, Media and Corporate Services, David Jensen, to meet Max whenever they were in Adelaide. Ross Whowell, Manager Group Promotions and Special Events, organised the lunch to coincide with their attendance at the PANPA Conference.

The lunch was held in an old stone cottage at Magill, site of Penfolds first vineyard, 20 minutes outside Adelaide.



*Pictured left to right are Ross Whowell, Ian Mackley, David Jensen, Lee Casey and Max Schubert seated.*

So what was the best Grange? According to Max, it was hard to separate the 1953 and the 1955, though he gave the nod to the latter because it was the first to win recognition.

What is the best age to drink it? That varies from vintage to vintage, but Max advises you wait a minimum of 20 years before opening.

How is it best enjoyed? In Max's view, when it is drunk and talked about over a plate of fine Australian cheeses.

And decanting? Decant into a carafe in the usual manner leaving the sediment in the bottom of the bottle. Then wash out the bottle and pour the wine back into it. Allow two hours to breathe.

## AAPT Ahoy as P&O Spreads Sales

AAP Telecommunications has helped cut costs and expand the sales of the Australian subsidiary of the shipping and service giant, P&O.

P&O expects an annual saving of around 20 per cent on telecommunications costs totalling millions of dollars as a result of switching to AAPT.

P&O Group IT Manager Malcolm Everitt said the savings have resulted from improved efficiency in all areas of P&O's telecommunications.

The P&O operation utilises a number of private lines leased from AAPT that connect the company's principal offices in Sydney and Melbourne as well as divisional centres in that city and regional offices throughout Australia.

"The switch to AAPT has made a significant contribution to reducing our costs on long distance and international calls while the billing information we receive has allowed for a more thorough analysis of our call patterns and enabled us to predict future networking requirements precisely," said Mr Everitt.

AAPT's InSight billing and reporting system provides customers with graphical and statistical analysis of network traffic.

P&O Holidays was also the first organisation to use AAPT's InTouch Service, allowing their customers to ring from anywhere in Australia or New Zealand for the price of a local call.

P&O Holiday's use of 13AHOY on the alphanumeric keypad as their six digit number has revolutionised their promotional strategy.

It advertises the number nationally and the campaign has been so successful that a Meridian switchboard with an unlimited queuing facility was installed to accommodate the increased demand placed on the company's telemarketing division.

Marketing Manager Judy O'Brien said that previously P&O Holidays had directed prospective customers to local travel agents.

"Now our advertising has more impetus and we are getting more calls and a better strike rate," she said.

## Zipper Club Members Enjoy Open Heart Open

David Jensen, General Manager, Corporate and Media Services, narrowly missed clinching a first-up win in a unique Australian golf tournament at Melbourne's Kingston Heath course on April 6.

A 160-strong field hit-off in the fifth Open Heart Open – an event restricted to players who have undergone open heart surgery.

David, who had surgery in late 1991, was headed for victory when 48-year-old Victorian Peter Andrew snatched a late win with 36 stableford points.

Playing off an 18 handicap, David was second with 34 points.

Group Human Resources Manager, Neil Hope, who had open heart surgery in 1988, also lined up for the first time and, playing off 15, finished in the top third of the field with 26 points.

The event, which included three players who have had full heart transplants, was given an enormous boost this year when Australian golf legend Kel Nagle, the 1960 Centenary British Open Champion, agreed to play.

Kel, who had open heart surgery in September last year, struggled off scratch but finished with a creditable 24 points.

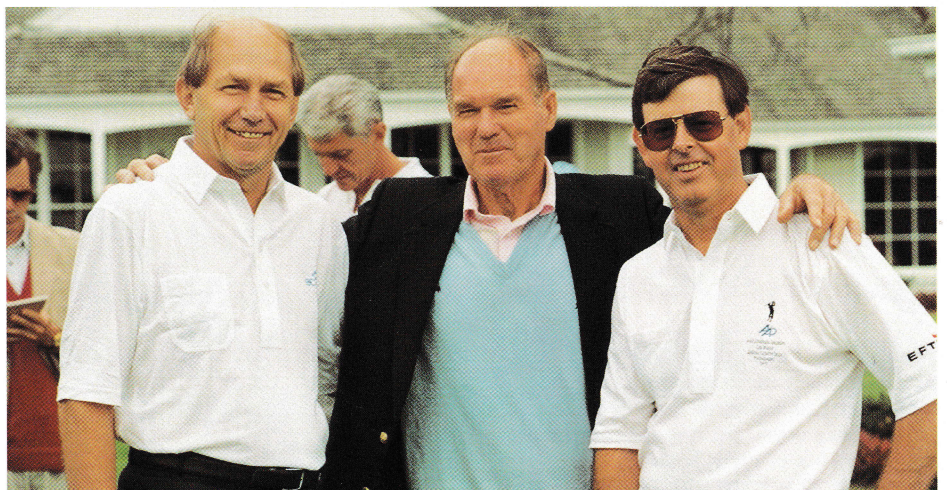
While open heart surgery would not normally be credited with boosting a golfer's form, David disagrees.

"I've actually lost a shot off my handicap – it slows your swing down a bit," he laughed.

David has been in top golfing form recently, winning The Bulletin's Corporate Golf Day four-ball event with partner Gary Kearley, General Manager of Young and Rubicam, at The Australian course in Sydney on March 16.

While describing the Melbourne event as a lot of fun, Neil was not exactly smiling after his round. He was bemoaning Melbourne's famous sand belt course with its lightning fast greens, which saw him three putt seven times.

Footnote. Monica Watt, from Cooma, the women's section winner and a World Transplant Games Champion, carries the heart of a 20-year-old man given to her by murdered heart surgeon Victor Chang in 1983.



David Jensen and Neil Hope pictured with former British Open Golf Champion Kel Nagle at Kingston Heath.

### DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS?

If you know of anyone who has not received a copy of AAP Today mailed to their home, please ask them to check the address on their pay slip. AAP is posted out to every member of staff to the address shown on their pay packet. Please let the Pay Office know if you have moved recently.

AAP Today will now also accept small advertisements or announcements from staff members at no charge.

So if you have a special event to announce, property to rent, or anything to sell, trade or give away, fax the details to AAP Today on (02) 231 6929. Deadline for the next edition is Friday, June 25.