

# Grand Intentions

## Editorial

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**Abstract:** It is with the best of intentions that Australia embarked on a program of privatisation that commenced in the 1970s and continues today. Government's efforts over the past 40 years to divest itself of utilities and enterprises in a shift from a command economy to a broader market economy is to be applauded but only lightly for the implementation of the privatisation program has, at times, been a shambles resulting in failed legislation and regulation, unwanted outcomes, and a lack of competition. It is timely that Emeritus Professor Trevor Barr has authored a novel that was inspired by real events during the privatisation of Australian Government telecommunications assets. The aptly named and newly privatised Telco One has recruited a chief executive officer from New York and the business culture transition begins. Decades after the events described in Professor Barr's *Grand Intentions* the Australian telecommunications market remains in a state of constant flux with successive Governments failing to put in place a balanced, fair and open competitive market that would justify the privatisation program. The rationale for the National Broadband Network highlights the quagmire into which the Government of the day was forced to step and it will be another five to ten years before a future Government has the next opportunity to restructure the industry. Let us hope that they get it right this time around.

## In This Issue

In this issue the *Journal* includes two reviews of Emeritus Professor Trevor Barr's novel *Grand Intentions* (ISBN 978-1-921030-16-1), five articles covering a range of current and historical technologies and a discussion of Telecom Australia's directory service.

*A Review of Grand Intentions* provides a review of Professor Barr's novel *Grand Intentions* that highlights the shift from a public service to a private sector culture within Telco One and how this affects the goals and aspirations of the employees and shareholders.

*The Trollope of Australian Telecommunications* provides a review of Professor Barr's novel *Grand Intentions* that notes how the novel describes the ugly side of the neo-liberalism sweeping Australia in the 1990s and 2000s and the impact of the importation of the more ruthless US corporate culture.

*The APT Frequency Arrangement in the 700 MHz: Reflections on the International Spectrum Management Regime* reflects on the frequency arrangements in the 700 MHz band and out of band emissions of the mobile terminals below 694 MHz with the view that there should be a harmonisation of approaches in the various global telecommunication regions.

*Conceptualising the Australian telecommunications industry self-regulation scheme in the context of Australian judicial system and administrative justice* considers the future role of bodies including the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman in the overall telecommunications self-regulation regime.

*The Transformation of Telecom's "Ugly Duckling"* is a historical review of Telecom Australia's directory publishing business and how this business transformed from a public service entity into a flourishing privatised business that eventually became a casualty of the Internet era.

*Fifth Generation Cellular Networks* provides a review of fifth generation mobile and as we draw closer to this next generation mobile cellular technology becoming available this article highlights some of the technical and regulatory issues that have yet to be finalised.

*Social Practices of 3D Printing: Decentralising Control, and Reconfiguring Regulation* considers the social practices of 3D printing by comparing consumer perspectives and practices with legal scholarship on intellectual property regimes.

*Colour Television in Australia* provides a historical paper from the Journal in 1976 regarding the colour conversion of transmitters in the National Television Service by Telecom Australia.

## Grand Intentions

Emeritus Professor Trevor Barr has penned a fascinating novel about the period following the privatisation of the Australian Government's telecommunications assets during the 1990s. This stunning account of the goals and aspirations of those close to the heart of the recently privatised Telco One is the "Don's Party" of the telecommunications scene during a chaotic and unfulfilling era.

The novel *Grand Intentions* (ISBN 978-1-921030-16-1) centres around the lives of four people caught up in the whirlwind created by Telco One's recently appointed chief executive officer, who was recruited from New York to bring a shareholder value focused US corporate management style to Telco One.

At the heart of *Grand Intentions* are the people affected by the underlying malaise created by failed Government privatisation policy, a problem that persists today. Professor Barr provides us with an inspired insider's view of the effect that business and political decisions have on everyday Australians.

The National Broadband Network is the most recent example of how Government, a generation after the events portrayed in *Grand Intentions*, has been forced to step into the quagmire created by successive failed attempts by earlier Governments to deregulate telecommunications and to put in place a more balanced, fair and open competitive telecommunications market. It will be another five to ten years before a future Government has the next opportunity to restructure the industry after privatising NBN Co.

We should be confident that our elected representatives will get it right the next time around or is it with the best of intentions they will fail yet again?

## Looking Forward

The key theme for the December 2016 issue will be *International Telecommunications Legislation and Regulations*. As the global digital economy evolves it is timely to consider the different telecommunications markets and how each is coping with the transition to next generation networks – the 'gigabit race' – and how competition is being fostered with the market.

Papers are invited for upcoming issues and with your contributions the Journal will continue to provide the readership with exciting and informative papers covering a range of local and international topics. The Editorial Board values input from our readership so please let us know what themes you would like to see in the coming year.

All papers related to telecommunications and the digital economy are welcome and will be considered for publication after a peer-review process.

*Mark A Gregory*