

Claims of possible illegal activity by Telecom Australia

FEDERAL Police officers are investigating allegations of possible illegal activity on the part of Telecom Australia.

Officers from the Federal Police visited Portland last week and interviewed Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp proprietor, Alan Smith, who is one of the four original members of COT (Casualties of Telecom).

The supposedly illegal activity alleged by COT members including unauthorised phone tapping (referred in official documentation as "monitoring") and, in extreme cases, industrial sabotage against specific

businesses.

Mr Smith told the Observer that COT's problems with Telecom were becoming increasingly serious.

He said the original complaints against the national telecommunications carrier involved primarily line faults, incorrect "disconnected number" recordings and incorrect billing problems.

Now, however, the problems cited by COT involve alleged buggings and other potentially criminal behavior within Telecom ranks.

COT is now pushing for a Royal Commission into Telecom, rather than a Parliamentary or

Senate Inquiry.

Mr Smith said the reason for this was because people could be subpoenaed to give evidence before a Royal Commission; not so with either a Parliamentary or a Senate Inquiry.

"The Federal Police are certainly looking into this to see if there is any criminal involvement," Mr Smith said.

"The Federal officers who were here for about five and a half hours on Monday, were surprised at the blatant way in which some of these matters were handled (by Telecom).

"They were also surprised to find that much important information released to us under FOI (Freedom of Information) has apparently

been heavily censored.

"Certain sensitive pieces of information have been blanked out on our copies of the documents, even though this information doesn't fall within the area of law which allows it to be suppressed."

Mr Smith said he had been reliably informed that there were about 9500 documents relating to his on-going complaints.

He said some documents had been claimed to have been lost, while others never existed.

Mr Smith already has about 3500 documents relating directly to his business.

"I've now been told I

will have to put down a deposit of \$750 for the rest of the documents for my business alone," he said.

"David Hawker (Liberal Member for Western Province) has written to the Federal Ombudsman off his own bat, seeking that these fees be waived, on the grounds that our research is in the public interest.

"With some of the information which has been coming out under FOI, we are finding that country Victoria, and especially within the Wannon electorate, have a large number of know telecommunications problems."

Mr Smith cited one case which had come to COT's attention regarding a retired Victorian police officer.

He said the former officer believed he had been over-charged for all of his Telecom bills over the past 10 years.

According to Mr Smith, the former officer had logged all of his calls since his telephone problems first came to his attention.

"He was being billed for calls he never made, and these discrepancies were being shown up in his itemised accounts," Mr Smith said.

"He eventually moved from Echuca to Phillip Island, and his bills were more than halved, despite making a similar average number of phone calls.

"It has been estimated that the incorrect billing has cost this man a minimum of between \$4000 and \$6000 over the last decade."

Mr Smith said the Federal police had shown a great deal of interest in the case.

He urged anyone with genuine, documented complaints against Telecom about billing or over-charging, to get in touch with COT on (03) 2877094 or (03) 2877095 as quickly as possible.



**Save time
and money
Let us deliver
your order**

Legs of Lamb

\$3.90 kg

BBQ Chops

\$2.90 kg

Beef Schnitzel

\$5.99 kg

Marinated Steak

\$6.90 kg

Corned S/Side

\$5.50 kg

Porterhouse Steak

\$6.50 kg

PORTLAND: Mon-Fri morning

HEYWOOD: Mon-Thurs night



Australian Meat

Holdings Pty Ltd



*The latest in an occasional series
from Portland Vic Roads Customer
Service Manager Ross Colley.*

Drink drive laws and heavy duty licences

Why .00 has become law for drivers of heavy vehicles.

In most jobs, alcohol and working don't mix.

Jobs involving the safety of other people require absolute concentration and alertness. Professional driving is one of these jobs.

Professional drivers face greater demands on their driving skills because of the power and size of their vehicles.

They also have to cope with long hours at the wheel and driver fatigue.

Who has to blow .00?

From January 1, 1992, any driver of a truck with a gross vehicle mass of more than 15 tonnes, or a bus with seating for more than 12 people (including the driver), can only drive with a .00 blood alcohol concentration.

Blow over .00 and you'll blow your licence and wallet.

First offences:

If caught with a blood alcohol level between .00 and .05 your licence can be cancelled for up to six months and you will receive a heavy fine.

Subsequent offences:

The case is taken to court. Your licence may be suspended until the court hearing.

On conviction, you can be fined up to \$2500 and all your driving licences cancelled for a minimum of 12 months.

Carry your licence:

From January 1, 1992, drivers are required to carry their licence to do so will see the fine to \$500.

However, if they are within 80kms of their normal operating area they will not be fined if they:

29