

# Telecom IT boss has twin visions

By TRUDI MENTOSH

TELECOM's new managing director of research and information technology, Dr Bruno Sorrentino, admits he is a passionate strategist and team builder driven by two visions for the corporation in the new multimedia Age of Convergence.

The first is to build on the momentum of innovative products we have seen in Australia while at the same time supplying a much more business-driven focus as we can accelerate the delivery of world class products and services, Dr Sorrentino, 50, said in Melbourne.

His second vision involves helping develop Telstra's Telecom's offshore arm - into becoming the Asia-Pacific region's leading carrier before the end of this decade.

Speaking at the launch of his first interview about his new role, the chief multimedia strategist wanted no time in setting the record straight about the fate of the Telecom Research Laboratories (TRL), which has since been rebranded as the jewel in the crown of Australian telecommunications research.

He rejected any rumours of rebranding among TRL scientists and engineers as the Clayton headquarters announced there were any plans to introduce various changes to a Telecom shake-up.

"I believe in speech and I certainly believe we must not lose integrity and credibility. And at the same time it would be naive to say there haven't been problems and difficulties that have grown up with the laboratories over the years.

"The mission now is to focus on this innovative research talent... research skills that are critically world class. We need to introduce a business management plan with a business-driven approach to

research so we can deliver the products faster."

Referring to Telecom's overall research and IT strategies, Dr Sorrentino said, "The effort we are about to turn the corner and build a bridge to the 21st century, but we have to polish it up. The first step is to build up the trust with the TRL and Telecom's TCO funders, and then

focus on these great research strengths. In the competitive global space we all have to be driven by business needs, and that includes research and development. We also should be looking at building on the strengths of our talent in research and security and bringing in reward structures that both enhance our research talents and provide customer-driven positions.

Dr Sorrentino, who was born in Verona, Italy, believes the European tradition of promoting home-grown inventions rather than using their most talented people encouraged more in Australia.

"Since I came here in 1981, I have been constantly impressed by the courage of our scientists to pursue their international background that he possesses a deep love of travel, the arts, music and literature.

He has already arranged the three Chinese household gods of good fortune, representing wealth, wisdom and long life, to guard the commercial aspects of his new Telecom's "technological heart" - and gave the way for the seamless integration of multimedia products and services for the "intelligent" home and workplaces.

Dr Sorrentino said he was well aware he had jumped into the hot seat in pulling the reins of the research business at a time of unpre-



Dr Sorrentino with his little Chinese household gods of happiness, wisdom and long life - Picture: ALAN FUNNELL

He will head three functions in his new role - covering the TCO, the office of the CIO and the TRL.

Dr Brian Lawrence will continue as chief information officer, reporting to Dr Sorrentino and will retain his position as part of Telecom's senior management team. Telecom's chief executive officer, Mr Frank Potts, said the appointment of Dr Sorrentino reflected the corporation's drive to maintain a dynamic technological base to take account of the rapid merging of computing, telecommunications and entertainment industries.

"We believe that a serious research and development base that extends also to IT was critical for the corporation to sustain competitive advantage, and to expand into value-added services in telecommunications and their communications services.

Dr Sorrentino said he firmly held to a "bottom-up research" approach to R&D and had no time for top-down decisions. He also believed that Telecom could not reinvent the wheel every time.

"Of course there is room to do some original, leading research efforts here and overseas - forming multi-creating relationships. We are not an R&D and technology centre, that's right across the globe, telecommunications from."

"There is room for a range of relationships in the future. There are very exciting times ahead for the convergence of technologies. That means we have to be able to deliver the service our customers want."

ceded technological change and opportunity in the industry, but he believed his international business management skills would stand him in good stead.

After held more than a week officially in his new role, Dr Sorrentino has already spoken to at least 40 of the 600-000 researchers at TRL.

He said he was pleased with the positive responses he had had and hoped the air had been cleared of all the rumours.

A naturalised Australian, he brings with him 36 years

international experience in research, IT and business management skills. Potts arrived from Imperial College, the UK, the US and Australia, the past 12 months.

Dr Sorrentino has worked as a research scientist for Telstra and as an IT and technology director for multinational corporations seeking to expand here and throughout the Asia-Pacific.

He was group general manager for Technology Ltd and then chief information officer of ANZ bank.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Padua, an MA in applied mathematics from the University of Chicago and a PhD in physics from Imperial College London.

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