

## Telecom's computer chief quits suddenly

By CHARLES WRIGHT,  
computer editor

The chief of research and information technology at Telecom, Dr Bruno Sorrentino, has resigned five weeks into his new job — after suspicions were raised about his qualifications.

Dr Sorrentino, formerly chief information officer at the ANZ Bank and a consultant to some of Australia's biggest corporations, is regarded as one of Australia's most highly-qualified information technology experts.

Scientists from Telecom Research Labs became alarmed when they were unable to find any published research by their new director, whose CV lists a PhD in physics from Imperial College, London. His new staff were unable to find any record of that degree on an international computer database.

Dr Sorrentino also claims to have a BSc from Padua University, in Italy, and a masters in applied mathematics from the University of Chicago.

Research Labs staff reported their suspicions to the Public Sector Union, which passed it to senior Telecom management.

Late last week, Dr Sorrentino was called back from a United States visit by Mr Doug Campbell, Telecom's group managing director, network and information technology, and at a meeting in his office on Tuesday, he was asked to explain.

Dr Sorrentino resigned.

It is believed Dr Sorrentino suggested that he held a PhD in another name.

The issue is a serious embarrassment for Telecom's senior management, who had hailed Dr Sorrentino's appointment as the spearhead of a bold new direction in its research and development, and for its board, who approved the appointment.

Telecom did not issue a news release on the resignation, and refused any comment. Senior management did not return calls from The Age.

His position at Telecom had given Dr Sorrentino responsibility for Australia's biggest information technology budget, worth several hundred million dollars a year, and research spending of about \$150 million.

Yesterday afternoon, Dr Sorrentino also resigned from a part-time position as senior associate in Melbourne University's Graduate School of Business. The head of the school, Professor John Rose, said that Dr Sorrentino had told him he had other commitments.

In an interview with The Age on Tuesday afternoon, Dr Sorrentino denied that he had been called back from the US early, and claimed that suggestions that he was not known at Imperial College were "a red herring".

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He said he did not believe it was appropriate to provide any details of his academic qualifications, but "Telecom is a very professional organisation and like any organisation they'd have done everything in terms of due diligence. So I wouldn't, if I were you, give any credence to any rumors or anonymous references."

But a spokesman for the student records department at Imperial College told an Age London correspondent, Peter Ellingsen, that he had not been able to find any record of Dr Sorrentino attending Imperial College.

When asked to comment yesterday afternoon, Dr Sorrentino said: "I've got to tell you what you are suggesting is really defamatory. My qualifications are impeccable and they stand, and I will be very happy for you or anybody else qualified to look at my qualifications."

Dr Sorrentino referred The Age to his solicitor, Mr Joseph D'Abaco, of Phillips Fox, who he said "would provide whatever evidence is necessary to satisfy you".

Last night Mr D'Abaco arranged a conference at The Age with Dr Sorrentino, but he declined to answer a series of questions.

In the afternoon, Dr Sorrentino had said: "You are really focusing on the wrong issue. The issue is one of change in an organisation where you don't have the middle management support, even though it's a fantastic opportunity."

"All I've done is something any human being would do... exercise an option in the contract. I terminated it. It's nothing more complex than that."