

Rear Window

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Coonan irony beyond dispute

Irony abounded at yesterday's launch of an alternative dispute resolution strategy for technology professionals.

The keynote speaker, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, **Helen Coonan**, was clearly aware of the possibilities presented by getting event organiser the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators Australia involved in her own tumultuous affairs.

"I think we might learn a few lessons today on how we might use alternative dispute resolution with Telstra," said Coonan, obviously battered from several lawsuits the telco is aiming in her direction.

One of the aims of the new strategy, which also involves professional groups the Australian Computer Society and the Australian Project Management Institute, is to encourage the ICT industry to include dispute resolution clauses in large contracts.

But Coonan moved quickly to squash any doubt the federal government wasn't already doing enough in the area, pointing out it had included such clauses in a recent



remodelling of its procurement system. This leads to the question: So why do we need the strategy again? Maybe it's for those pesky Labor states.

"Let me thank the senator for

having taken time out from her busy pre-election campaign," one of the speakers said.

Coonan left immediately after her speech, just before the morning tea champagne was served.