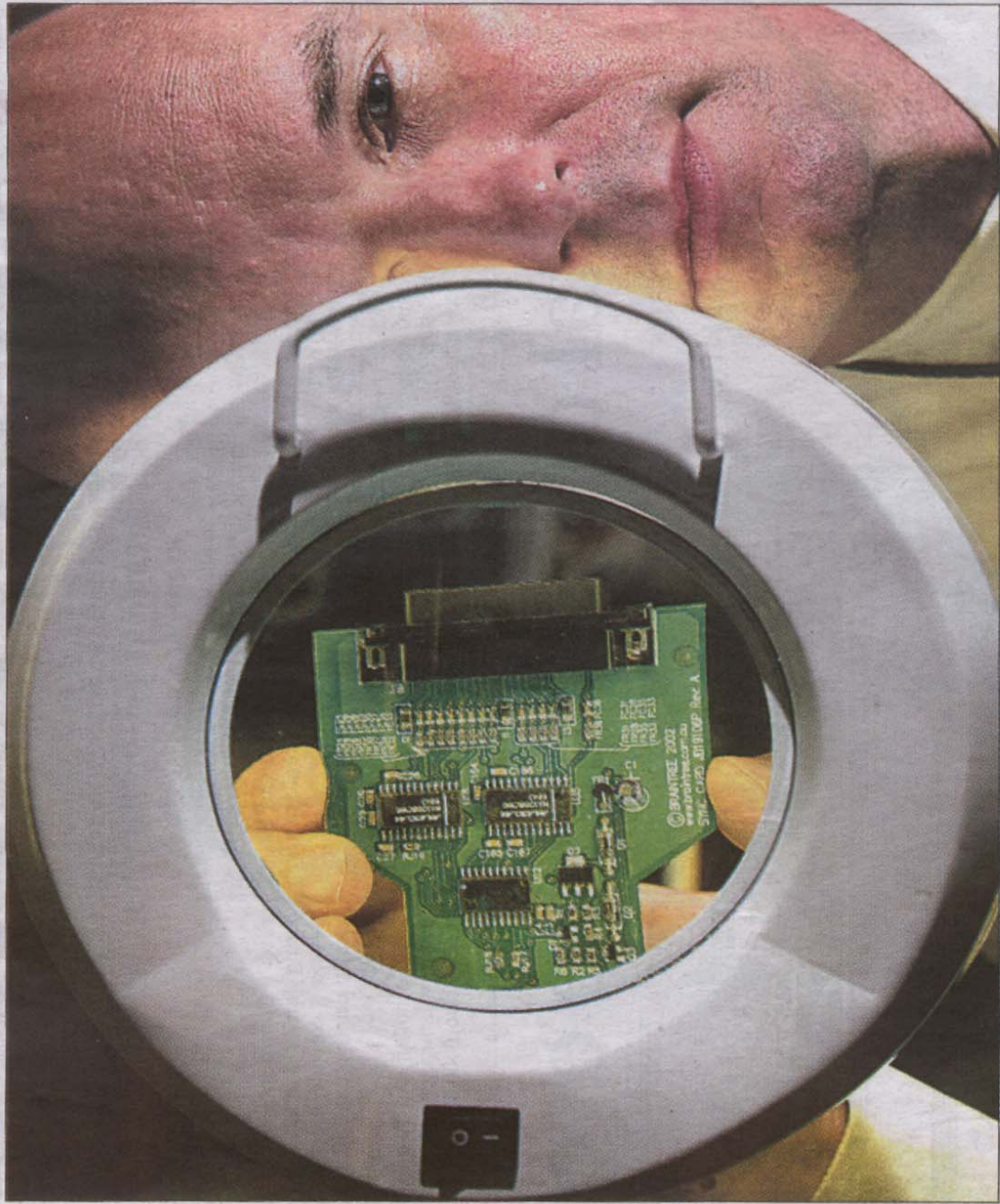


Banks, telcos gear up for wireless Eftpos



Jennifer Foreshew
• Wireless

THE Commonwealth Bank and Braintree Communications have field-tested the Brisbane company's go-anywhere wireless Eftpos gateway over a General Packet Radio Service network.

The system was tested during the busy Christmas period at a major retail site in the Sydney suburb of Chatswood.

Braintree Communications chief executive Peter Hall said the GPRS network, an overlay of the mobile GSM network, provided exceptional transaction data rates.

The Commonwealth Bank and Braintree have tested Braintree's GPRS terminal adaptor by sending Eftpos transactions from existing terminals over the GPRS network to the bank's host.

"The device performed faultlessly and the network seemed able to stand the traffic load," Hall says.

Migrating Eftpos from fixed-wire to mobile networks provides better mobility, easier Eftpos network management and lower transaction costs, he says.

Hall says the system is not being used in the field currently, but other banks are testing it. "I would expect the first roll-out in March-April," he says.

Telstra and Optus both have Braintree's GPRS terminal adaptor, the Axon-G4020, which allows users to use existing point-of-sale hardware and seamlessly convert to a wireless connection to a bank.

Hall says the Commonwealth Bank has advised that it will make a decision in the next couple of weeks as to where it will source adaptors.

Eftpos connectivity is usually part of a bundled telco offering.

The GPRS terminal adaptor enables temporary point-of-sale locations during busy trading periods or for events such as market stalls, trade shows, kiosks, mobile service centres and remote locations where landline connections are too costly or slow.

Hall says the next challenge is to field-test its Ethernet-to-GPRS ATM terminal adaptor.

Braintree is also working on a CDMA version of the product, which is expected to be released in the next few months.

"The existing product is mainly aimed at permanent connections, but we are also releasing a smaller product that deals with substitution for dial-up Eftpos," Hall says.

Field tests: Peter Hall says the live GPRS systems are expected in a couple of months