

## **HOLD THE VAN, NEW SYSTEM BEAMS IN**

The Seven Network is to test a new compact broadcasting system that could render outside broadcast vans obsolete in covering fast-breaking news stories.

The system, developed by Perth –based Balconi, is small enough to be carried on a helicopter or checked in as luggage on a commercial airline flight.

That means coverage of news such as accidents and disasters in remote areas can begin as soon as a news crew arrives by air, rather than waiting for the arrival of an OB van by road.

Balconi managing director Con Michael said part of the value of the suitcase-sized system was that it could be up and running within seconds of deployment without a technician.

Regional TV operator Prime has also shown interest in the system.

The units cost about \$40,000 compared with \$500,000 for an OB van.

“You need something that can be thrown onto a helicopter or thrown into a commercial aircraft and which does not take generators to keep going, and they can be on air within 60 seconds of setting up,” Mr. Michael said.

While the system is satellite based, using the IPStar satellite, it features internet protocol technology similar to that in Voice Over Internet Protocol phone systems, with stories delivered in high-quality Mpeg4 format.

“There is no live system of quality that is reliable,” Mr. Michael said of the reason behind the invention.

Seven will trial it in Perth for 12 months.

**Simon Canning**