Wireless microphones—get ready for 1 January 2015
Media kit
MARCH 2014
Background

Many community groups and businesses use wireless audio devices—such as wireless microphones and public announcement systems—for a range of purposes, including school assemblies, religious services, theatre and live music performances, sporting events and conferences.

Currently, many of these devices use spectrum located in the 694–820 MHz frequency range. But from 1 January 2015, this frequency range will no longer be available for wireless microphone users as the spectrum will be used to deliver 4G mobile broadband services.

Community groups and businesses will need to take action now to make sure they can continue to use their wireless microphones after this date.

Changes are also happening that will affect the supply of such devices into Australia.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA) wants to ensure all community groups and businesses understand the change and know what they should do to prepare. A range of easy-to-understand resources is available on the ACMA’s website www.wirelessmicrophones.gov.au.

What’s spectrum?

Spectrum is a valuable public asset used for a range of purposes, for example, mobile phones, television channels and wireless microphones. Spectrum is divided into frequency ranges called megahertz (MHz).

We are focusing on spectrum located in the 694–820 MHz frequency range, which is also known as the ‘digital dividend’ and is currently used by digital television services and wireless microphone users.

The ACMA and the government is undertaking a body of work to make the digital dividend available to deliver 4G services to meet Australia’s growing demand for faster, greater coverage mobile broadband services.

To make the digital dividend available, Australia switched off its analog television services in December 2013.

In addition, digital television services are being relocated (or ‘restacked’) from the 694–820 MHz range so that it uses spectrum in the 520–694 MHz range. Restack will be completed by 31 December 2014. At the same time, the ACMA is working with community groups and businesses to relocate wireless microphone users from the digital dividend to other parts of the spectrum, such as the 520–694 MHz range.

An illustration of the digital dividend is shown on the next page.
Figure 1 Illustration of digital dividend before and after 1 January 2015

Before 1 January 2015

After 1 January 2015

In Figure 1:

> The top row shows how spectrum in the 520–820 MHz range is currently being used.
> Analog television services are shown in red—these services ceased in December 2013.
> Digital television services are shown in green. By 31 December 2014, all digital television services will move (or ‘restack’) so that they use spectrum is below 694 MHz.
> The blue columns are unused spectrum. Wireless microphones can operate in this unused spectrum.
> The digital dividend (694–820 MHz) is shown in yellow.

What’s changing?

From 1 January 2015, the 694–820 MHz frequency range will no longer be available for wireless microphone users. The ACMA is strongly encouraging users to start preparing for this change by checking whether their existing equipment will comply with the new changes after 31 December 2014.

From 17 September 2013, suppliers must include a warning label with each wireless audio device that operates in the 694–820 MHz range advising potential buyers the device must not operate in this frequency range after 31 December 2014.

From 1 January 2014, suppliers will no longer be able to import, manufacture or sell wireless audio devices in Australia that operate in 694–820 MHz.

What does a wireless microphone look like?

This change affects wireless microphones and audio devices that operate in the 694–820 MHz range. Below are examples of devices likely to be affected. For more images, the ACMA has a photo gallery on its website.
Figure 2 Handheld microphone, headset and clip-on wireless microphones

Figure 3 Handheld wireless microphone with headset and body pack

Photos courtesy of Jands Pty Ltd

Figure 4 Wireless public address systems

Photos courtesy of Aerobic Microphones Australia
What do users need to do?

Before 31 December 2014, users will need to check their existing wireless microphones and audio devices to confirm whether they will comply with the new changes after this date. If it does not comply, then it cannot be used.

The ACMA has fact sheets that provide information on the changes to users and suppliers and what they can do to prepare.

1. **Plug and play** users—targeted to community groups, small businesses and people with a non-technical background. The name refers to the people who buy a wireless microphone and simply expects to plug it in to use it.
2. **Professional users**—targeted to people with some technical background, such as program making and special events, professional musicians and music venue managers.
3. **Suppliers**—targeted to businesses that import, manufacture or sell wireless audio transmitters.

Copies of these fact sheets are also available in Attachment A.

The ACMA also has 33 fact sheets that sets out what frequency ranges are available for wireless microphone users on an area-by-area basis. Another way to find out what frequency ranges you can use, is to use one of the ‘frequency finder’ tools that have been developed by wireless microphone suppliers.

In addition, FAQs are available for suppliers, providing further information on how the regulatory changes affect the supply of wireless audio devices into Australia.

How can I tell my community or business group about this change?

The ACMA is encouraging community and business groups to share information about the transition to their members.

You can use the following wording in your community or business newsletter, magazine or website:

Many community groups and small businesses use wireless audio devices—such as wireless microphones and public announcement systems—for a range of purposes, including school assemblies, religious services, theatre and live music performances, sporting events and conferences.

Currently, many of these devices use spectrum located in the 694–820 megahertz range. But from 1 January 2015, this spectrum will no longer be available for wireless microphone users.

Find out more about the change by visiting www.wirelessmicrophones.gov.au which has fact sheets and resources to help you prepare for the change.

Where can I go for more information?

> Online **wireless microphones hub**—a ‘one-stop shop’ for information on the changes affecting the use and supply of wireless microphones.

> For people who aren’t sure if they own a wireless microphone and other audio devices, there is a **photo gallery** of the most common devices that will be affected by the changes.

> **Useful industry links**—for trade-in deals for old equipment, free audits for people who aren’t sure if their existing equipment will be affected by the change, and frequency finder tools.
Are you buying a wireless mic?—with the help of suppliers, the ACMA has compiled a list of wireless microphones that are available for purchase.

Free, monthly e-bulletin that provides updates on the ACMA’s work on wireless microphones.

Stakeholder engagement plan for 2013 and 2014—this sets out how the ACMA is educating community groups and businesses about the changes.

Media coverage
The ACMA’s media releases on the changes:

> 14 March 2014—‘ACMA consults on benefits for wireless microphone users’
> 6 January 2014—‘Now hear this: wireless mic users get ready for switchover’
> 1 October 2013—‘ACMA moves to protect wireless mic users’
> 17 September 2013—‘Can you use your wireless mic in 2015?’
> 13 May 2013—‘New frequency ranges for wireless microphones’

Media coverage is increasing as communities and businesses become aware of the changes:


Additional links to media coverage and case studies on how community groups and businesses are preparing for the changes can be found in Stakeholder engagement—what’s new! on the ACMA’s website.

Contact details
To request an interview, please contact: Emma Rossi, Media Manager, on (02) 9334 7719, 0434 652 063 or media@acma.gov.au. For all other enquiries, email freqplan@acma.gov.au.