

To the ACMA,

I write to you in response to the consultation paper entitled 'Proposed changes to amateur licensing arrangements Non-assigned amateur stations.' In short, I think that option C, with some provisos that I will outline below, would be the best option for amateur radio in this country. Easier access to the bands will be beneficial to Australia in general. Accessibility, coupled with experimentation, can only have a positive economic impact on the Australian economy in the long term. However, fair access to all spectrum areas free from financial constraints is mandatory for experimentation and innovation.

My background is in the Maker movement; I am the current secretary, long term committee member, and president of a community maker space in the past. One thing that I have noticed when it comes to amateur radio in the maker community is that the ongoing cost of licencing directly impacts people moving their experimentation into the amateur radio area. Instead, people chose to keep their experiments small scale and local; this means that the opportunity for collaboration is lost, which has a lasting effect on innovation. With the removal of the ongoing burden of licensing costs, more people involved in the maker community would gladly seek a license to aid in their experimentation. While I cannot quantify this, I do not think, given the average maker's skill set, that passing licencing qualifications will be a burden.

One thing that will need protection under a new licensing regime is the ability of armatures to build and modify radio equipment. We must avoid the temptation to introduce a regulatory framework where only approved commercial equipment can be used. For innovation to happen, people must be free first to build and learn from existing technology, so there is a robust technical foundation. This foundation will allow amateur radio operators to manipulate and experiment with equipment once they have mastered the basics. If building and changing equipment is not available to all amateur radio licences, there will be a negative impact on innovation.

Something that is out of the box that needs consideration in this consultation would be opening part of the FM broadcast band to non-commercial, low power output community radio. The ability for neighbourhood radio stations (similar to the Campus Radio stations in the USA) to be a thing outside of metropolitan centres where traditional community radio models may not be viable has the potential for a massive social impact. Currently, the technology is readily and cheaply accessible for people to build a small radio station that allows for local content and downloaded podcasts to be transmitted. Allowing through the mechanism of amateur radio for this technology to be utilised on the neighbourhood level would positively impact communities' voice and relevant content. The current regulatory framework makes it prohibitively expensive for this to happen and impacts more significant than any potential loss of revenue, particularly in non-metropolitan locations.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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