

# Overview – Amateur Class Licence and supporting arrangements

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# Amateur Class Licence and supporting arrangements

The ACMA plans to implement class licensing arrangements for amateurs in February 2024, at the same time as the proposed new Amateur Radio Qualification Framework and accredited assessors scheme that are discussed in detail in the consultation paper.

Following careful consideration of submissions to the [consultation on proposed amateur class licensing arrangements](#) (class licence consultation), we have finalised the arrangements to be implemented alongside the Radiocommunications (Amateur Stations) Class Licence 2023 (the Amateur Class Licence). These arrangements seek to maintain the integrity of the amateur service and assist with the ACMA's effective administration of it.

This document sets out how the proposed Amateur Class Licence and supporting arrangements will operate, and provides an update on our consideration of the key issues we consulted on.

The class licence, and supporting policies and information that will underpin the class licence, are planned for release on our website in December 2023, ahead of the class licence commencement in February 2024.

## The Amateur Class Licence

The proposed Amateur Class Licence, if made, will authorise the operation of amateur stations by amateurs that hold recognised qualifications at the foundation, standard and advanced level. It will replace the need for apparatus licences to be issued for such stations. The class licence will also authorise the operation of amateur stations by overseas visiting amateurs with recognised overseas qualifications and licences. Repeater and beacon stations will continue to be authorised under apparatus licences.

The proposed Amateur Class Licence sets out the licence conditions that would apply to the operation of amateur stations. The conditions include frequency bands of operation, transmitter output power limits and amount of bandwidth that can be used, and transmission emission modes. Different conditions would apply to each level of amateur station, with advanced stations having the highest level of flexibility in how they may operate.

In response to feedback received on the class licence consultation, we intend to make minor changes to the Amateur Class Licence including:

- > changes to the definition of pY, the date of a World Radio Conference, and definition of IEC 62232 in Schedule 1
- > addition of a provision about the use of amateur stations in emergency services operations and training
- > addition of a provision about restrictions on connection to a public telecommunications network
- > addition of a note about the use of the AX call sign on specified dates.

The proposed Amateur Class Licence would also provide for the new qualification regime, assignment of call signs by the ACMA and a power for the ACMA to declare

recognised qualifications, as well as specify that call signs can be assigned for a time period and can be renewed.

The proposed licensing arrangements will provide a simpler framework for amateurs while retaining operational utility.

## **Arrangements on commencement of the class licence**

If made, all qualified amateurs will be authorised to operate under the class licence, even if they hold an apparatus licence. Non-assigned amateur licences will continue in force until they expire, or they can be surrendered. If you surrender your licence, you may be eligible for a partial refund of the transmitter licence tax. Upon the class licence's commencement, the ACMA intends generally not to issue new non-assigned amateur licences, and to not renew existing licences.

To assist in a smooth transition to the class licensing arrangements, around a month prior to the class licence's commencement, the ACMA will send all current non-assigned amateur licensees a letter that will confirm whether they are authorised to operate under the class licence and include their qualification level and call sign (transition letter). The ACMA intends that the transition letter can also be used for Advanced amateurs travelling overseas, to demonstrate to that overseas jurisdiction their ability to operate amateur stations in Australia.

Qualified persons holding recognised qualifications and a call sign will be authorised to operate under the class licence as long as they comply with its conditions.

Consequential amendments will also be made to various legislative instruments and a new instrument made, as outlined in the consultation paper, to support the introduction of the new amateur arrangements.

## **Qualification regime**

Subject to the outcomes of consultation, the ACMA intends to implement the arrangements consulted on in this paper:

- > a qualification framework that will continue to ensure only persons holding the appropriate qualification are authorised to operate amateur stations
- > an accreditation scheme will enable the ACMA to accredit assessors to conduct and assess theoretical and practical examinations for amateur radio
- > fees relating to issuing ACMA recognition certificates, assessing applications for recognition of prior learning and issuing call signs.

## **Call sign assignment**

The ACMA will remain the entity solely responsible for assigning Australian amateur call signs – that is, we are not implementing the proposal we consulted on, that a third party could become the call sign entity.

We will publish a document outlining the ACMA's policy on call sign arrangements before the class licence commences. The current call sign policy, outlined on the AMC website, will largely be replicated into an ACMA call sign policy document that will be published on the ACMA website. This guidance will outline changes to some policy positions outlined in the class licence consultation paper, including that there will be limits on the number of call signs an amateur can be assigned.

Amateurs with a recognised qualification may apply to the ACMA for a call sign. The ACMA will consider the application and be guided by the call sign policy. This will be outlined in the call sign policy, which will be made available on the ACMA's website ahead of the class licence's implementation.

## **Public register of call signs and amateur details**

The ACMA will maintain a register of assigned call signs and a list of available and reserved call signs on its website. This will be available at the same time as the class licence commences. The register will detail:

- > the call sign
- > whether the call sign is assigned, available or reserved
- > if assigned, the qualification level of the amateur to whom it is assigned.

## **Amateur operating procedures**

The ACMA will maintain the amateur operating procedures on the ACMA's website. The updated amateur operating procedures (and syllabi) will be published after the class licensing arrangements and new accreditation rules are made.

## **International reciprocity arrangements for Australian amateurs with Advanced qualifications travelling overseas**

The ACMA will update European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications (CEPT) on the timing of the class licence's introduction, requesting that CEPT updates its table to include recognition of the new advanced qualification that will be issued after commencement of the new qualification regime.

For advanced amateurs wishing to travel overseas to countries participating in CEPT Recommendation T/R 61-01 (CEPT Radio Amateur Licence) and/or CEPT T/R 61-02 (Harmonised Amateur Radio Examination Certificate) (HAREC), the ACMA intends that the transition letter will cover off on CEPT requirements. For amateurs who receive an ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced), they will receive a letter outlining their qualification level and relevant CEPT requirements. The new ACMA recognition certificate (Advanced) will contain text required to be HAREC compliant.

## **Reciprocal arrangements for overseas amateurs visiting Australia**

The current arrangements for reciprocal licensing are proposed to be retained. The consultation paper outlines that reciprocal licensing arrangements other than those with HAREC-participating countries will need to be revisited to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Given our current focus on ensuring the smooth operation of new amateur radio arrangements from February 2024, this is something we consider is best undertaken when a review of the syllabi is undertaken, since any major changes to the syllabi may impact our reciprocal arrangements.

Under the class licence, the ACMA will extend the current grandfathering of licences issued before 19 September 2019 on the basis of a recognised overseas qualification/licence. The transition letter will recognise the equivalent Australian qualification level and can be used for the purposes of operating under the class licence without the need to obtain a new ACMA recognition certificate.