



**Australian
Communications
and Media Authority**

Changes to CB radio arrangements

Consultation paper

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Canberra

Level 3
40 Cameron Avenue
Belconnen ACT

PO Box 78
Belconnen ACT 2616

T +61 2 6219 5555
F +61 2 6219 5353

Melbourne

Level 32
Melbourne Central Tower
360 Elizabeth Street
Melbourne VIC

PO Box 13112
Law Courts
Melbourne VIC 8010

T +61 3 9963 6800
F +61 3 9963 6899

Sydney

Level 5
The Bay Centre
65 Pirrama Road
Pymont NSW

PO Box Q500
Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

T +61 2 9334 7700
F +61 2 9334 7799

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Background

Under Part 4 of Chapter 3 of the *Legislation Act 2003*, most legislative instruments ‘sunset’. They are automatically repealed on the 1 April or 1 October that first occurs 10 years after they are registered. This is an automatic process applying to most instruments.

The following instrument is due to sunset:

Name of instrument	Sunset date
Radiocommunications (Citizen Band Radio Stations) Class Licence 2015	1 October 2025

Preliminary view

We have reviewed the Radiocommunications (Citizen Band Radio Stations) Class Licence 2015 (CB class licence). We have formed the preliminary view that the CB class licence is operating effectively. It forms a necessary part of the legislative framework.

We propose to repeal the CB class licence and remake it prior to the sunset date. It will include only the minor changes outlined in this paper. We propose to retitle it as the **Radiocommunications (Citizen Band Radio Stations) Class Licence 2025** (CB class licence 2025).

Additional matters

In addition to proposing to repeal and remake the CB class licence, we are seeking comments on 2 additional matters:

- the channels to be used only in an emergency
- the channels to be used only for telemetry and telecommand.

What the CB class licence does

The Citizen Band Radio Service, more commonly known as 'CB radio' is a 2-way communications service that can be used by any person in Australia for personal or business purposes. CB radios operate on designated channels in the high frequency (HF) (26.965 to 27.405 MHz) and ultra high frequency (UHF) (476.425 to 477.400 MHz) bands. CB radios may be used for voice communications or for telemetry and telecommand applications.

The CB class licence authorises the operation of CB radios (referred to as CB stations in the CB class licence). The CB class licence specifies the conditions with which an operator of a CB radio must comply. Those conditions deal with technical parameters, including the shared frequencies on which CB radios must operate, and operational matters. Provided that an operator complies with the conditions, their operation of a CB radio is authorised.

Changes to the CB class licence

We consider that the CB class licence is operating effectively. We propose to remake it without significant change so that its effect is preserved.

However, to ensure that the CB class licence is fit-for-purpose, we are proposing some minor changes outlined below. A draft of the CB class licence 2025 is available alongside this paper.

Frequency modulation use in the HF band

We propose to make provision for CB radio operators to use frequency modulation (FM) in the HF band because:

- the CB class licence currently only authorises CB radios to operate on single side band or amplitude modulation in the HF band
- the use of FM in the HF band has already been implemented in Europe and the US
- when we last amended the Radiocommunications Equipment (General) Rules 2021 in 2023, we included the test standard ETSI EN 300 433, which recognises the use of FM for HF CB stations.

Given these matters, we consider it appropriate to provide domestic CB radio operators with this additional flexibility.

Initiating contact on HF channels 11 and 16 and UHF channel 11

We propose to remove the requirement that a person operating a CB radio must initiate contact on 3 specific channels. This is because we recognise that the use of CB radios has changed since we made the CB class licence in 2015. For example, we understand that some CB radio operators now arrange regular group discussions using specific channels. This contrasts with a CB radio operator monitoring a call channel in the event that another operator makes a call to a particular CB radio operator or a general call to any CB radio. To reflect these changes in the use of CB radio, and provide greater flexibility for CB radio operators, we have removed this requirement.

Consent of an inspector about altering a CB radio

We propose to remove the provision that empowered an inspector to give written consent to the alteration of a CB radio for the purpose of testing. We do not consider that there are any circumstances in which a person would need to alter their CB radio for the purpose of testing it.

Prohibition on certain ‘on-air’ conduct

We propose to remove the condition prohibiting the operation of a CB radio either:

- in a way that would be likely to cause a person to be seriously alarmed or affronted, or
- for the purpose of harassing a person.

This condition was included in the first class licence for CB radios made over 30 years ago. We considered it timely to question whether it is necessary to retain this condition.

Given that the object of the *Radiocommunications Act 1992* (the Act) is about the management of spectrum, we have examined whether a condition about behaviour supports

that object. We have formed the view that it does not, and that other Commonwealth, state and territory laws better prevent and prohibit this behaviour.¹

We receive a limited number of complaints and enquiries each year about conduct alleged to have contravened this condition. For example, between July 2023 and October 2024, we received 4 enquiries and 14 complaints. The enquiries were about inappropriate language and name-calling, while most complaints were about alleged harassment and verbal abuse directed at the complainant. In several cases, we received competing complaints from both parties to a single exchange.

For most complaints, we did not receive sufficient evidence to support further consideration. This means that the actions we can take in such circumstances are limited. Were we to receive sufficient evidence, we would take action consistent with our [compliance and enforcement policy](#). Where we consider that the alleged conduct is serious, we will refer the complainant to the relevant police force. We consider that the relevant police force is the appropriate body to deal with such allegations.

We also note the views of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights² to the effect that the condition and its limitation on the freedom of expression is not a proportionate way to achieve its goal of the protection of public order.

Since the condition does not support to the object of the Act, and the actions the ACMA could take in relation to conduct contravening the condition are generally not well adapted to dealing with this conduct, we propose not including the condition in the CB class licence 2025.

Directions given by inspectors and other persons

Section 9 of the CB class licence empowers an inspector or certain other persons to give a direction to a CB radio operator in certain circumstances. While we have retained these conditions, we propose including information about the matters that an inspector or person should consider before giving such a direction. We also propose to provide for merits review for such a decision.

A CB radio connected to a telecommunications network

The CB class licence includes a condition that requires a CB radio connected to a telecommunications network to comply with one of 2 legislative instruments: the Telecommunications (Labelling Notice for Customer Equipment and Customer Cabling) Instrument 2015, or the Radiocommunications (Compliance Labelling – Devices) Notice 2014. The purpose of the condition was to protect a telecommunications network where a CB radio was connected to a network.

We do not propose including such a condition in the CB class licence 2025, as we consider it unnecessary. This is because, with modern telecommunications networks, CB radio will connect with the network using an interface, such as a mobile phone or personal computer, reducing the potential for damage to the network. Moreover, the Radiocommunications (Compliance Labelling – Devices) Notice 2014 is no longer in force. Labelling requirements

¹ For example, offences covering similar conduct include section 474.17 of the *Criminal Code* (Cth), which provides for a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment for using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence, and various provisions in state and territory criminal legislation about threats and stalking.

² Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, [Human rights scrutiny report, Twenty-sixth report of the 44th Parliament](#) (18 August 2015) and [Human rights scrutiny report, Thirtieth report of the 44th Parliament](#) (10 November 2015).

for equipment are in the Radiocommunications Equipment (General) Rules 2021, with which equipment (including CB radios) must comply.

Use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications have become popular tools used by some members of the CB radio community. The applications enable devices, such as smart phones, to operate on CB radio channels. On downloading a VoIP application on their smart phone and connecting the smart phone to a CB radio, a CB radio operator can use their smart phone as a walkie-talkie. As we do not consider that the connection of a VoIP application to a CB radio presents any risk to a telecommunications network, we propose to include a specific condition in the CB class licence 2025 to authorise this type of operation.

Formatting and other drafting changes

Apart from the specific changes proposed above, we propose to change the format of the CB class licence to simplify it and to reduce unnecessary duplication. We want to remove table items 5 and 8 in Schedule 1 of the CB class licence, which specify channels on which CB repeaters can operate. This is to avoid unnecessary repetition because those channels are specified in other table items in Schedule 1.

We also propose other minor changes to:

- remove the definition of 'telecommunications network', as it is no longer needed
- remove the definition of 'ARPANSA Standard' because this expression is defined in the Radiocommunications (Interpretation) Determination 2025
- remove the definitions of 'F3E' and 'G3E', and replace them with a definition of 'emission mode' that refers to the International Telecommunication Union's Radio Regulations
- change the definition of 'CB repeater station' to reflect changes in the numbering of table items in Schedule 1
- omit duplicated or obsolete provisions
- correct references to things that have been misdescribed
- replace references to legislation or bodies that are outdated or no longer exist.

Other matters for comment not reflected in the CB class licence 2025

We want to raise 2 further matters that are not reflected in the CB class licence 2025. This is because we wish to understand what stakeholder views are – including levels of demand – to inform our future approach in these areas. We welcome evidence (either qualitative or quantitative) to support any comments provided.

Emergency communications on HF channel 9 and UHF channels 5 and 35

We wish to understand how the CB radio community, industry, emergency services agencies and interested stakeholders view the prohibition on operating on HF channel 9 (27.065 MHz) and UHF channels 5 (476.525 MHz) and 35 (477.275 MHz) except in an emergency.

We would like to know what the level of demand is for these channels, from the perspective of:

- the bodies that monitor them
- the people who may use or have used them
- emergency services agencies.

For example, do stakeholders consider that all 3 channels should remain as emergency channels? Or should we retain the HF channel only where access to mobile phone services and Triple Zero may be more limited? We would also like to receive any historical evidence from the monitoring bodies about the number and types of emergency calls made on the three channels. This includes information about the actions that were taken in response to the calls.

We seek this information because there has been a significant shift in consumer behaviour and considerable technological development since those channels were initially reserved for emergency use. The proliferation of mobile phones means that calling Triple Zero to ask for assistance from emergency services organisations, with qualified dispatchers, is now commonplace. Given these changes, we consider it appropriate to obtain the public's views on these channels.

Channel arrangements for data transmission (telemetry and telecommand)

We are considering converting UHF channels 22 and 23 – which are 25 kHz channels used for data transmission for telemetry and telecommand – to narrowband (12.5 kHz) channels. We are also considering authorising data transmission for these purposes on 3 'reserved' channels (61, 62 and 63). This would provide more spectrum for these specific purposes. To inform our future approach in this area, we would like to obtain further information about the current use of CB radios for these purposes.

Channels 22 and 23

We would appreciate CB radio operators providing us with specific examples of how they are using channels 22 and 23. This is to inform our understanding of how converting the channels to narrowband might affect existing users of these channels. For example, given that older CB radios do not operate on 12.5 kHz channels, would converting the channels create issues for existing users that would require them to purchase new equipment?

Channels 61, 62 and 63

We would like to understand the level of demand for additional channels for data transmission. For instance, do current users of channels 22 and 23 consider that there is a need for 3 extra data transmission channels for telemetry and telecommand?

Invitation to comment

Making a submission

Comments are sought from the public regarding the ACMA's proposal to remake the CB class licence, with minor changes, on that basis that it is operating effectively and efficiently, and on the other matters raised in this paper.

[Online submissions](#) can be made by uploading a document. Submissions in PDF, Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format are preferred.

Submissions by post can be sent to:

The Manager
Spectrum Licensing Policy Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 13112
Melbourne Vic 8010

The closing date for submissions is **COB, Tuesday 15 July 2025**.

You can email consultation enquiries to SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au.

Publication of submissions

The ACMA publishes submissions on our website, including personal information (such as names and contact details), except for information that you have claimed (and we have accepted) is confidential.

Confidential information will not be published or otherwise released unless required or authorised by law.

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