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Proposal to vary the Horsham licence area plan

Consultation paper

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Proposed changes to the Horsham licence area plan

We are seeking your comments on proposed changes to the *Licence Area Plan – Horsham Radio* (Horsham LAP). These changes will allow the 3WM commercial radio broadcasting service to simulcast in AM and FM. We are proposing to vary the Horsham LAP to:

- Make FM spectrum available to enable the 3WM commercial radio broadcasting service in the Horsham RA1 licence area to convert transmission from AM to FM.
- Make FM spectrum available for one new FM infill transmitter for the 3WM commercial radio broadcasting service to serve the Horsham RA1 licence area, at Edenhope.
- Make FM spectrum available for one new FM infill transmitter for the 3WWM commercial radio broadcasting service to serve the Horsham RA1 licence area, at Edenhope.
- Vary the technical specifications for the existing 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter, increasing its maximum effective radiated power (ERP), and decreasing its maximum antenna height.
- Vary the technical specifications for the existing 3HHH community radio broadcasting service in the Horsham RA2 licence area, changing its frequency from 96.5 MHz to 106.3 MHz, to enable the 96. 7 MHz frequency to be used for the proposed 3WM FM transmission.
- Make other minor amendments to modernise/update the Horsham LAP.

It is intended that spectrum for the AM transmission will continue to be available for the 3WM commercial radio broadcasting service in Horsham after the FM transmission is implemented, due to significant anticipated coverage loss should the AM transmission cease.

A draft variation of the Horsham LAP accompanies this consultation paper and details these proposed changes.

Issues for comment

We welcome comments from interested stakeholders on the issues raised in this paper, or on any other issues relevant to the proposed LAP variations.

Details on making a submission can be found at the Invitation to comment section of this paper.

Introduction

Planning broadcasting services

Our broadcasting planning functions are set out in Part 3 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (the BSA). We promote the objects of the BSA (section 3), including the economic and efficient use of radiofrequency spectrum. We consider the planning criteria set out in section 23 of the BSA.

When planning analog broadcasting services, we refer to the *ACMA approach to broadcast planning and varying LAPs*. This provides an overview of the regulatory framework, policy objectives and planning process for analog broadcasting services.

Under section 26 of the BSA, we must, by legislative instrument, prepare LAPs that determine the number and characteristics – including technical specifications – of broadcasting services to be available in particular areas of Australia. The BSA also provides us with a discretionary power to vary LAPs.

AM–FM conversions

FM conversion of AM services has the potential to improve listener experience and support industry as it adapts to changing listener preferences. FM conversion can deliver improved audio quality, reduced signal interference and lower costs for broadcasters.

Our published guidance entitled *Principles for planning AM to FM conversions in regional licence areas* (AM–FM conversion principles) informs the way we resolve complex issues regarding AM–FM conversions and infill transmitters for commercial radio broadcasting services in regional areas.

We will continue to consider and progress current proposals for conversions in non-competitive markets, while we open the program for conversions in competitive areas so that more listeners can benefit. We expect to finalise the requests in non-competitive markets that are currently underway, and, where appropriate, spectrum has already been identified.

In October 2025, we published an update to our policy on the AM to FM conversion program. The update addresses the ACMA's position on town-based dual coverage FM upgrades. This where an FM conversion proposal would involve AM and FM simulcasting, upgrading the more populous, urban area or areas of a licence area to FM transmission but retaining AM coverage for the more sparsely populated areas.

The update also clarified our position on Principle 3 of our AM-FM conversion principles, in relation to situations where AM–FM conversions require another broadcaster to move frequency or make other changes to technical specifications to enable the conversion.

More information about the AM–FM conversion principles can be found on the ACMA website.

Overview of the Horsham LAP

The Horsham LAP currently determines the licence areas of Horsham RA1 and Horsham RA2.

The radio services planned in the Horsham LAP are:

- Five national radio broadcasting services to serve the Horsham area (within the Horsham RA1 licence area).
- Three national radio broadcasting services to serve the Nhill area (within the Horsham RA1 licence area).
- One commercial radio broadcasting service to serve the Ararat, Horsham and Nhill areas (within the Horsham RA1 licence area).
- One commercial radio broadcasting service to serve the Ararat, Horsham, Hopetoun (Vic) and Nhill areas (within the Horsham RA1 licence area).
- Five open narrowcasting radio services, each to serve one of the Ararat, Stawell, Warracknabeal, Horsham and St Arnaud areas (within the Horsham RA1 licence area).
- One community radio broadcasting service to serve the Horsham area (within the Horsham RA2 licence area).

Proposal 1: commercial radio – Horsham LAP

Summary

We propose to vary the Horsham LAP to:

- Allow 3WM in the Horsham RA1 licence area to simulcast in AM and FM.
- Make spectrum available for an FM transmitter for 3WM to serve Horsham. The proposed technical specification will permit an FM transmitter to operate on frequency 96.7 MHz at 20 kW maximum effective radiated power (ERP), with an omnidirectional (OD) antenna pattern at a maximum antenna height of 165 m from Broadcast Australia Site Cnr Henty Hwy and Dooen School Rd Dooen.
- Make spectrum available for a new FM infill transmitter for 3WM to serve Edenhope. The proposed technical specification will permit an FM transmitter to operate on frequency 97.7 MHz at 100 W maximum ERP, with an OD antenna pattern at a maximum antenna height of 25 m from GWM Water tower 2 David Street Edenhope.
- Make spectrum available for a new FM infill transmitter for 3WWM to serve Edenhope. The proposed technical specification will permit an FM transmitter to operate on frequency 100.1 MHz at 100 W maximum ERP, with an OD antenna pattern at a maximum antenna height of 25 m from GWM Water tower 2 David Street Edenhope.
- Vary the technical specifications for the existing 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter, increasing its maximum ERP from 250 W to 1 kW, and decreasing its maximum antenna height from 30 m to 20 m.

We consider that this proposal is an economic and efficient use of spectrum that promotes the objects of the BSA, particularly the availability of a diverse range of radio services and efficient broadcasting planning (paragraphs 3(1)(a) and (b) of the BSA). In putting this proposal forward, we have considered the planning criteria in section 23 of the BSA, especially the number of existing broadcasting services and demand for new services (paragraph 23(c)) and technical restraints relating to the delivery or reception of broadcasting services in the licence area (paragraph 23(e)).

Background

Horsham RA1 licence area

The Horsham RA1 licence area includes:

- the city of Horsham
- to the north: the areas of Warracknabeal and, on the northern border of the licence area, Hopetoun
- to the north-west: the area of Nhill
- to the south-west: the area of Edenhope
- to the south-east: the areas of Stawell and Ararat
- to the east: the area of St Arnaud.

A map of the Horsham RA1 licence area is at Appendix A.

The licence area includes national park areas, including Little Desert National Park (just north of Horsham) and Grampians National Park (to the south-east).

The Horsham RA1 licence area overlaps with the following commercial radio broadcasting licence areas:

- Ballarat RA1
- Bendigo RA1
- Hamilton RA1
- Maryborough (Vic) RA1
- Mt Gambier RA1
- Remote Commercial Radio Service Central Zone RA1
- Swan Hill RA1.

Some of these overlaps – those with Ballarat RA1, Hamilton RA1 and Mt Gambier RA1 – are very slight, and 0.02% or less of the licence area population is in the overlap area. In other overlap areas, more significant numbers – sometimes over 2,000 people – are in the overlap area. See the map at Appendix B.

The population of the Horsham RA1 licence area is determined to be 59,908.[1]

Horsham is an agricultural area and a major regional city in western Victoria. Because of its location on the Wimmera Highway, it is often a key stop between Melbourne and Adelaide. Its key industries include wheat and sheep agriculture as well as transport, logistics and mineral sand mining.

Commercial radio broadcasting services in Horsham

In the Horsham RA1 licence area we have planned for:

- The commercial radio broadcasting service 3WM, with an AM transmitter serving Horsham and FM transmitters serving Ararat and Nhill.
- The commercial radio broadcasting service 3WWM, with an FM transmitter serving Horsham and FM transmitters serving Ararat, Hopetoun (Vic) and Nhill.

Both commercial radio broadcasting services planned in the Horsham RA1 licence area are licensed to Ace Radio Broadcasters Pty Limited (Ace Radio).

The AM transmitter for 3WM is planned, and operates, on 1089 kHz with a maximum cymomotive force (CMF) of 840 V and a directional antenna (DA) pattern. The nominal location of the site is in Lubeck and serves the Horsham area. 3WM has 2 additional FM transmitters. One is sited at Ararat to serve the Ararat area, operating on 96.1 MHz with a maximum 250 W ERP and a DA pattern. The other is sited at Lawloit to serve the Nhill area, operating on 92.9 MHz with a maximum 2 kW ERP and an OD antenna pattern.

The FM transmitter for 3WWM is planned, and operates, on 101.3 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 kW and a DA pattern. The nominal location of the site is in Laharum and serves the Horsham area. 3WWM has 3 additional FM transmitters. One is sited at Ararat to serve the Ararat area, operating on 98.5 MHz with a maximum 1 kW ERP and a DA pattern. The second is sited at Hopetoun to serve the Hopetoun (Vic) area, operating on 93.1 MHz with a

[1] Determined by the Determination of Population Figures under Section 30 of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. This determination uses data from the 2021 Census.

maximum 50 W ERP and an OD antenna pattern. The third is sited at Lawloit to serve the Nhill area, operating on 94.5 MHz with a maximum 2 kW ERP and an OD antenna pattern.

The 3WM service has been provided since 1933 under various call signs. The licence was acquired by Ace Radio in 1986. In 2022, Ace Radio expanded by launching the service in the Ararat area. It broadcasts local news, rural news, local sports, talkback and music.

AM and FM simulcast of 3WM

Coverage analysis of 3WM

The ACMA assessed coverage loss by comparing the coverage of the existing:

- 3WM Horsham AM transmitter located at Lubeck, operating on 1089 kHz with a maximum CMF of 840 V with a DA pattern
- 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter located at Ararat, operating on 96.1 MHz with a maximum ERP of 250 W with a DA pattern
- 3WM Nhill FM infill transmitter located at Lawloit, operating on 92.9 MHz with a maximum ERP of 2 kW with an OD antenna pattern

with the proposed:

- 3WM Horsham FM transmitter to be located at the 3WM Broadcast Australia Site Cnr Henty Hwy and Dooen school Rd Dooen, and to operate on 96.7 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 kW with a DA pattern
- 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter located at Ararat, operating on 96.1 MHz with a maximum ERP of 1 kW with a DA pattern
- 3WM Nhill FM infill transmitter located at Lawloit, operating on 92.9 MHz with a maximum ERP of 2 kW with an OD antenna pattern
- 3WM Edenhope FM infill transmitter located at Edenhope, operating on 97.7 MHz with a maximum ERP of 100 W with an OD antenna pattern.

The existing 3WM FM infill transmitter at Nhill is proposed to continue operating on the same specification. Details of the new specifications are set out in the draft variation to the Horsham LAP for 3WM FM at Horsham in Attachment 1.11 and the 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter at Attachment 1.10.

The proposed 3WWM FM infill transmitter at Edenhope would have the same specifications as the proposed 3WM FM transmitter at Edenhope in terms of nominal location, maximum ERP, maximum antenna height and antenna pattern.

Our assessments of coverage loss predict that the new proposed 3WM Horsham FM transmitter, combined with the 3 infill transmitters at Ararat, Nhill and Edenhope, would result in between 23.04% and 37.48% less noise-limited coverage of the overall population within the Horsham RA1 licence area, compared with the existing 3WM Horsham AM transmitter combined with the existing 2 infill transmitters at Ararat and Nhill.

When assessed for interference limited coverage, the coverage loss is predicted to be, similar, between 23.88% and 37.89% of the overall population within the Horsham RA1 licence area.

These coverage loss figures areas are significant and the coverage loss is not considered acceptable. The ACMA and Ace Radio have agreed that the 3WM AM transmitter should continue operating after the FM transmission is enabled.

We published an update in October 2025 to our AM–FM conversion program policy. We stated that we are open to considering proposals for AM/FM simulcasts in certain situations (page 1 of the update). Our preference is to plan for a conversion where all listeners in the licence area can receive the benefits of FM transmission. However, this is not always practical or possible. In some cases, for instance where most of the population lives in a town or towns – and the surrounding areas are sparsely populated – it is practical for the more populous, town-based areas to be upgrade to FM coverage while the others continue to receive AM transmission. This is called a town-based dual coverage FM upgrade. This is the case in the Horsham area.

Overspill analysis of 3WM FM transmission

An analysis of the predicted signal overspill from the proposed main 3WM FM transmitter at Horsham and the existing and new 3WM FM infill transmitters indicates that the proposed FM transmission will overspill significantly less into the overlapping and adjacent licence areas of Swan Hill RA1, Bendigo RA1, Maryborough (Vic) RA1 and the Remote Commercial Radio Service Central Zone RA1, compared with the existing AM transmission overspill, which is planned to remain operating The current total overspill from the 3WM AM transmission is estimated at approximately 152,061 people. The overspill for the proposed 3WM FM transmission, including all proposed infill transmitters, is predicted at approximately 133–248 people, and is acceptable. This overspill is considered minor and incidental to providing the service.

Interference analysis

An analysis by the ACMA indicates that there is risk of potential interference to nearby services from the proposed 3WM FM Horsham transmitter on 96.7 MHz.

The risk of potential interference to the Latrobe Valley (3JJJ) co-channel broadcasting on 96.7 MHz is predicted to be between 0 and 2,328 people.[2] Most of the population predicted to suffer interference is in Ballarat and west of Melbourne, outside the intended area of coverage, and they should receive alternate coverage from the services 3JJJ Ballarat (Lookout Hill) and 3JJJ Melbourne services. Due to these alternate services, the risk of interference is regarded as low.

There is also risk of potential interference with national broadcasting service planned to serve Nhill on 97.3 MHz in the Horsham LAP. The affected population is predicted to be between 0 and 176 people. The areas affected are at the edge of coverage and near Horsham. However, the Nhill transmission of the national broadcasting service is not currently active and is not expected to serve the area where interference is predicted (Pimpino area). The areas that might be affected, if it were activated in the future, are better served by transmissions from Horsham. There are 2 national radio broadcasting services (3PNN and 3ABCRN) operational in Horsham which could provide alternate coverage. The risk of interference is considered low in the current circumstances. Should the Nhill transmission of the national broadcasting service be activated in the future and interference

[2] The ACMA uses the ITU-R Rec. P. 1546-1 and CRC Predict prediction models with 2021 ABS Census data. The different models can sometimes generate very different estimates, depending on the circumstances.

issues arose, Ace Radio would be expected to work with the ABC to mitigate those interference issues.

We have analysed the risk of potential interference to nearby services from the proposed 3WM FM Edenhope infill transmitter on 97.7 MHz and regard it as low and acceptable.

A standard advisory note limiting protection to the suburban grade coverage of 66 dBµV/m is proposed to be added to the 3WM Edenhope and Ararat infill transmitter specifications to manage the risk of interference (see Schedule 4, Attachment 1.12A in the draft variation to the Horsham LAP).

Varying specifications for 3WM Ararat infill transmitter

In October 2025, Ace Radio contacted the ACMA noting that the specifications of the existing 3WM Ararat FM infill transmitter did not match the specification of the 3WWM Ararat FM infill transmitter. The 3WM FM infill transmitter had a lower ERP as, at the time, it was considered that the AM signal was deficient in Ararat alone but adequately covered the areas of Great Western and Stawell which are just north-west of Ararat.

We had previously indicated to Ace Radio that it may be possible to match the Ararat FM infill transmitter specifications when an AM to FM conversion was done. Ace Radio confirmed in its email that it was still interested in a power increase for the 3WM FM infill transmitter. We believe that since 3WM will be now transmitting on FM as 3WWM is, it is appropriate for its Ararat FM infill transmitters to have matching specifications if possible.

Interference analysis

An analysis by the ACMA indicates that there is risk of potential interference to nearby services from the proposed 3WM FM Ararat infill transmitter on 96.1 MHz.

The risk of potential interference to the Goulburn Valley (3ABCFM) co-channel broadcasting on 96.1 MHz is predicted to be between 270 and 843 people.[3] Most of the population predicted to suffer interference is in Enmore, Harcourt and east of Bendigo. This is outside the intended area of coverage, and they should receive alternate and a higher grade of coverage from the 3ABCFM Ballarat service (Lookout Hill). Due to this alternate and higher-grade coverage available, the risk of interference is regarded as low and acceptable.

There is also risk of potential interference with the Ballarat (Warrenhelip) retransmission of 3SBSFM broadcasting on 95.9 MHz. The population predicted to suffer interference is between 2 and 51 people, in areas at the edge of coverage around Carngham, Hillcrest and Scarsdale, mainly in elevated state forest areas. Due to the low numbers of people predicted to be affected, the risk of interference is regarded as low and acceptable.

Varying 3WWM specifications

3WWM operates 4 transmitters in the Horsham RA1 licence area – one serving the Horsham area and 3 infill transmitters serving the Ararat, Hopetoun (Vic) and Nhill areas. The transmitter that serves the Horsham area is currently planned with the following specifications: a frequency of 101.3 MHz with a maximum ERP of 20 kW and a DA pattern,

[3] The ACMA uses the ITU-R Rec. P. 1546-1 and CRC Predict prediction models with 2021 ABS Census data. The different models can sometimes generate very different estimates, depending on the circumstances.

from a nominal site location in Laharum, and with a maximum antenna height of 30 m. However, the transmitter does not currently operate with these specifications.

In October 2020, Ace Radio submitted an application to vary their apparatus licence for the 3WWM Horsham FM transmitter so it could operate from Broadcast Australia Site Cnr Henty Hwy and Dooen School Rd Dooen, and to increase the antenna height to 180 m. This was approved in December 2020. An assessment undertaken by the ACMA found that operating under these new specifications would not breach the relevant criteria in Part 3 and Part 4 of the Broadcasting Services (Technical Planning) Guidelines 2017 so a variation of the Horsham LAP was not necessary.

Now that the Horsham LAP is being varied, we propose to vary the specifications of the 3WWM service to reflect the operating specifications.

We propose that the specification be changed to match existing operating specifications. This involves changing the nominal location of the 3WWM Horsham FM transmitter operating on 101.3 MHz to Broadcast Australia Site Cnr Henty Hwy and Dooen School Rd Dooen, increasing the maximum antenna height to 165 m and making this an OD antenna pattern. The increase in maximum antenna height will be to 165 m, not 180 m as was approved in December 2020. This is because we have since followed up with Ace Radio and found that 165 m more accurately reflects the current operating specifications of the transmitter (see item 14, changes to Attachment 1.13 in the draft variation to Horsham LAP).

The licensee has also requested that an FM infill transmitter for 3WWM be planned at Edenhope, to match the FM infill transmitter being planned at Edenhope for 3WM.

The proposed 3WWM Edenhope FM infill transmitter would broadcast on 100.1 MHz. It would broadcast from GWM Water tower 2 David Street Edenhope, have a maximum ERP of 100 W, an OD antenna pattern and a maximum antenna height of 25 m. The nominal location, maximum ERP, antenna pattern and maximum antenna height are the same as those of the 3WM Edenhope FM infill transmitter (see Schedule 5, Attachment 1.16A in the draft variation to Horsham LAP).

The Edenhope FM infill transmitter, like the Hopetoun (Vic) FM infill transmitter, would have a protection note stating that any transmission in accordance with the technical specification is planned on the basis that it will be protected to a minimum median field strength of 66 dBµV/m against interference from other broadcasting services.

Interference analysis of the proposed 3WWM Edenhope transmitter

Our analysis indicates that the proposed 3WWM FM Edenhope infill transmitter on 100.1 MHz may cause interference to the existing 3ABCRN Horsham service that broadcasts on 99.7 MHz. The population affected is predicted to be between 124 and 768 people with the current specifications planned in the Horsham LAP, where the 3ABCRN transmitter is sited in Arapiles.

However, the proposed variation to the Horsham LAP will move the 3ABCRN Horsham transmitter to co-site with the proposed 3WM FM transmitter in Dooen. No interference is expected with the nominal location change. The risk of interference is low and acceptable.

A standard advisory note limiting protection to the suburban grade coverage of 66 dBµV/m is recommended to be added to the 3WWM Edenhope infill transmitter specification to manage

the risk of interference (see Schedule 5, Attachment 1.16A in the draft variation to the Horsham LAP).

Preliminary view

We consider the proposal to vary the Horsham LAP in relation to its commercial broadcasting services to be an efficient and effective use of spectrum. The proposal promotes the objects of the BSA, especially paragraph 3(1)(a), by continuing to provide a significant proportion of the population of Horsham and surrounding areas with a diverse range of radio broadcasting services.

We also believe that the variation facilitates a broadcasting industry that is efficient and responsive to audience's needs (paragraph 3(1)(b) of the BSA), including audience's needs for more up-to-date technology, where relevant services are provided to communities, services provide adequate coverage and where interference issues are low.

The proposal has been assessed against the planning criteria in section 23 of the BSA. The proposed variations are considered be an efficient and economic use of spectrum, given the demographics in the area and their social and economic characteristics (paragraphs 23(a) and (b)). They will continue to provide services that are relevant to the particular social demographic such as rural news, local news and local sports, and have been established in the area for many years.

The possibility of AM transmission will be retained to serve the more sparsely populated areas, and the FM transmission will improve delivery of this content to the more populous town areas. The proposal will also not change the number of existing broadcasting services in Horsham, but will improve upon an existing service (paragraph 23(c)) and will make a more up-to-date technology, FM transmission, available (paragraph 23(d)).

The interference, overspill, coverage and spectrum availability have been assessed (paragraph 23(e) and (f)) and the proposal is found to be acceptable. We propose to put advisory notes in technical specifications as appropriate to mitigate issues that may arise.

Proposal 2: community radio – Horsham LAP

Summary

We propose to vary the Horsham LAP to:

- Allow the community radio broadcasting service 3HHH in the Horsham RA2 licence area to change frequency from 96.5 MHz to 106.3 MHz.
- Make spectrum available for an FM transmitter for 3HHH to serve Horsham in the Horsham RA2 licence area. The proposed technical specification will permit an FM transmitter to operate on frequency 106.3 MHz at 500 W ERP, with an OD antenna pattern and a maximum antenna height of 45 m from Horsham CBD 41m Lattice Tower 19 McLachlan Street Horsham.
- Vary the existing technical specification for the 3HHH community radio broadcasting service planned on 96.5 MHz so that it will cease to have effect from the commencement of the new 3HHH transmission planned on 106.3 MHz.

We consider that this proposal is an economic and efficient use of spectrum that promotes the objects of the BSA, particularly the availability of a diverse range of radio services and efficient broadcasting planning (paragraphs 3(1)(a) and (b) of the BSA). In putting this proposal forward, we have taken into account the planning criteria in section 23 of the BSA, especially the number of existing broadcasting services and demand for new services (paragraph 23(c)) and technical restraints relating to the delivery or reception of broadcasting services in the licence area (paragraph 23(e)).

Background

Horsham RA2 licence area

The Horsham RA2 licence area includes:

- the city of Horsham
- to the north: the areas of Dooen and Longerenong
- to the south-west: the areas of Veetis and Lower Norton
- to the south: the area of McKenzie Creek
- to the south-east: the areas of Drung and Bungalally.

A map of the Horsham RA2 licence area is at Appendix C.

The Horsham RA2 licence area is fully within the Horsham RA1 licence area.

Community radio broadcasting services in Horsham

In the Horsham RA2 licence area, we have planned for one community radio broadcasting service, 3HHH, with an FM transmitter serving Horsham.

The community radio broadcasting service planned in the Horsham RA2 licence area is licensed to Horsham & District Community FM Radio Inc (Horsham Community Radio).

The proposed new FM transmitter for 3HHH is planned to operate on 106.3 MHz with a maximum ERP of 500 W and an OD antenna pattern. The nominal location of the site is

Horsham CBD 41m Lattice Tower 19 McLachlan Street Horsham and serves the Horsham area. These are the same operating specifications as the specification planned on frequency on 96.5 MHz, apart from the frequency.

The 3HHH service provides a variety of programs including specialist music styles, programs catering to community groups and sporting clubs, local church groups and younger people's programs.

Varying 3HHH to enable AM–FM simulcast in Horsham

As discussed in the introduction above, the ACMA prioritises AM–FM conversion planning with the goal to improve the listener experience and support industry. In Proposal 1, we have explained why the proposed technical specifications for the commercial broadcasting service 3WM are considered suitable for FM transmission.

To enable the 3WM FM transmission in Horsham RA1 to operate on frequency 96.7 MHz, as in Proposal 1, the 3HHH FM transmission in RA2 must move to another frequency. The 96.7 MHz frequency has the potential for mutual and unacceptable interference with 3HHH on 96.5 MHz.

The frequency 106.3 MHz has been identified as a suitable frequency for 3HHH. 3HHH would not have to change any other technical specifications apart from its frequency.

Our policy in Principle 3 of the *Principles for Planning AM to FM conversions in regional licence areas* is that if another broadcaster needs to change frequency to facilitate an AM to FM conversion (or, as in this case, simulcast), the broadcaster must agree to the change with the converting broadcaster.

This policy was confirmed in our October 2025 update to the AM–FM conversion program. On 2 October 2023. Horsham Community Radio communicated to Ace Radio that their committee voted unanimously to support a changeover and frequencies, with Ace Radio supporting them in managing the changeover.

Interference analysis of the proposed 3HHH Horsham frequency 106.3 MHz

Our analysis indicates that the proposed 3HHH FM Horsham transmitter on 106.3 MHz may cause interference to the existing 3ABCFM Ballarat (Lookout Hill) service that broadcasts on 105.5 MHz. The population affected is predicted to be between 13,894 and 15,188 people. It may also cause interference to the existing 3JJJ Ballarat (Lookout Hill) service that broadcasts on 107.1 MHz. The population affected is predicted to be between 13,927 and 15,190 people.

The interference caused is known as fourth adjacent channel interference and is most likely to affect legacy receivers. In addition, the affected people in both these cases are at the edge of coverage of the relevant service, and outside the intended coverage area of the service. There are 2 frequencies for national broadcasting services that are planned in the Horsham LAP but currently unused, which could provide alternate coverage if implemented. While the numbers affected are potentially large, due to the area being outside the intended coverage area, only legacy receivers being affected and there being alternative transmissions planned in Horsham, the risk of interference is considered low and acceptable.

Should interference be realised, Ace Radio, being the beneficiary of 3HHH's move to the 106.3 MHz frequency, would be expected to work with the ABC to mitigate interference

issues. This could involve receiver replacement or discussing other suitable measures. Ace Radio has been made aware of and agreed to its responsibility. 3HHH has stated in writing that it understands the risk of interference and that Ace Radio will be responsible for mitigating interference issues.

Preliminary view

We consider the proposal to vary the Horsham LAP in relation to the community broadcasting services to be an efficient and effective use of spectrum. The proposal promotes the objects of the BSA, especially paragraph 3(1)(a), by enabling an AM–FM simulcast of a commercial broadcasting service and continuing to provide a community broadcasting service in Horsham, which provides a significant proportion of the population of Horsham and surrounding areas with a diverse range of radio broadcasting services. We also believe that by enabling the AM–FM simulcast of a commercial broadcasting service, the variation facilitates a broadcasting industry that is efficient and responsive to audience's needs (paragraph 3(1)(b) of the BSA), including audience's needs for the more up-to-date technology of FM transmission.

The proposal has been assessed against the planning criteria in section 23 of the BSA. The 3HHH service will continue to serve Horsham, and provides specialised programming that is relevant to the demographics in the area and their social and economic characteristics (paragraphs 23(a) and (b)). The proposal will also not change the number of existing community broadcasting services in Horsham, but will move the existing service to a new frequency (paragraph 23(c)) and will make a more up to date technology, FM transmission, available in the area for a commercial broadcasting service (paragraph 23(d)). The interference, overspill, coverage and spectrum availability have been assessed (paragraph 23(e) and (f)) and the proposal is found to be acceptable.

Proposal 3: minor amendments

In addition to the changes above, we also propose to make minor amendments to the text, schedules and attachments of the Horsham LAP:

- Update the introductory text to the Horsham LAP to be consistent with modern LAP standards.
- Change the nominal locations in Attachments 1.4–1.6 to reflect the current operating location of the services.
- Update the nominal location in Attachment 2.2, to be more specific and better reflect the name of the location. This will not change the actual nominal location.
- Change the Australian Map Grid Reference in Attachments 1.2,1.3, 1.7–1.12, 1.14–1.21 and Attachment 2.2 to Nominal Coordinates (GDA94) standard, which is the modern standard coordinate reference in licence area plans. This includes references to the coordinates in special conditions. Again, this will not change the actual nominal location.
- Remove from Attachments 1.2–1.21 and Attachment 2.2 the reference to the Broadcasting Services (Technical Planning) Guidelines 2017 and put the reference in a substantive clause at the start of the Horsham LAP. These changes are not intended to affect the operation of the Horsham LAP.
- Add standard special conditions to Attachments 1.2 and 1.11 to clarify that the CMF at all elevations must not exceed the specified CMF at 0 degrees elevation for all angles of azimuth.
- Decrease maximum antenna height in Attachments 1.3–1.6, 1.10, 1.14 and Attachment 2.2 to better reflect current operating specifications.
- Make modifications to wording in advisory notes in Attachments 1.17–1.21 to simplify and clarify the wording and make it more accessible. These changes are not intended to change the meaning or effect of the advisory notes.
- Make minor formatting and grammatical changes to the Horsham LAP and its various attachments.

Invitation to comment

Making a submission

We invite comments on the issues set out in this consultation 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
  Broadcasting Carriage Policy Section
  Australian Communications and Media Authority
  PO Box 78
  Belconnen ACT 2616

The closing date for submissions is **COB, Friday 12 June 2026**.

Consultation enquiries can be emailed to bcp@acma.gov.au.

Publication of submissions

We publish 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.

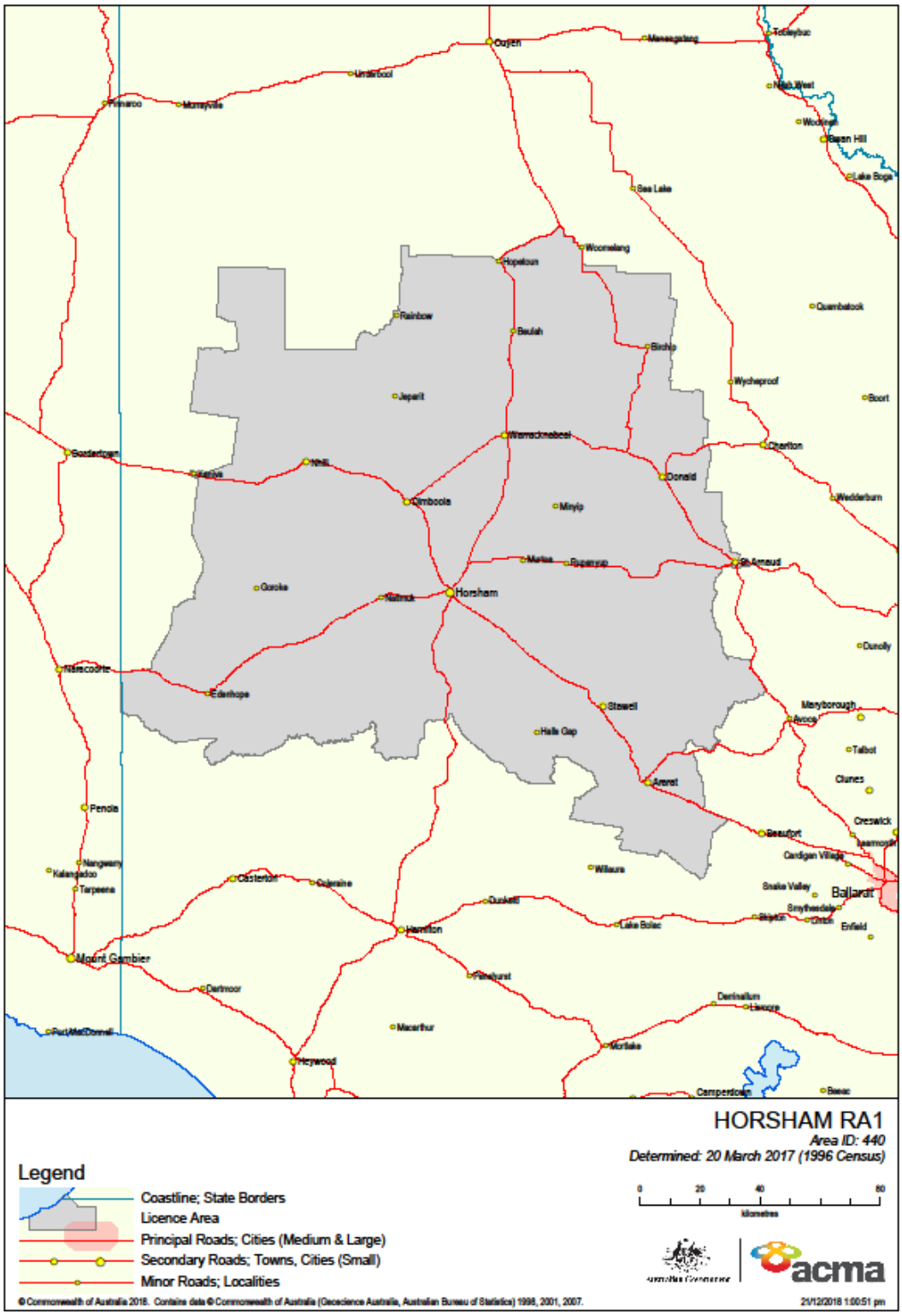
Confidential information will not be published or otherwise released unless required or authorised by law.

Privacy

View information about our policy on the publication of submissions, including collection of personal information during consultation and how we handle that information.

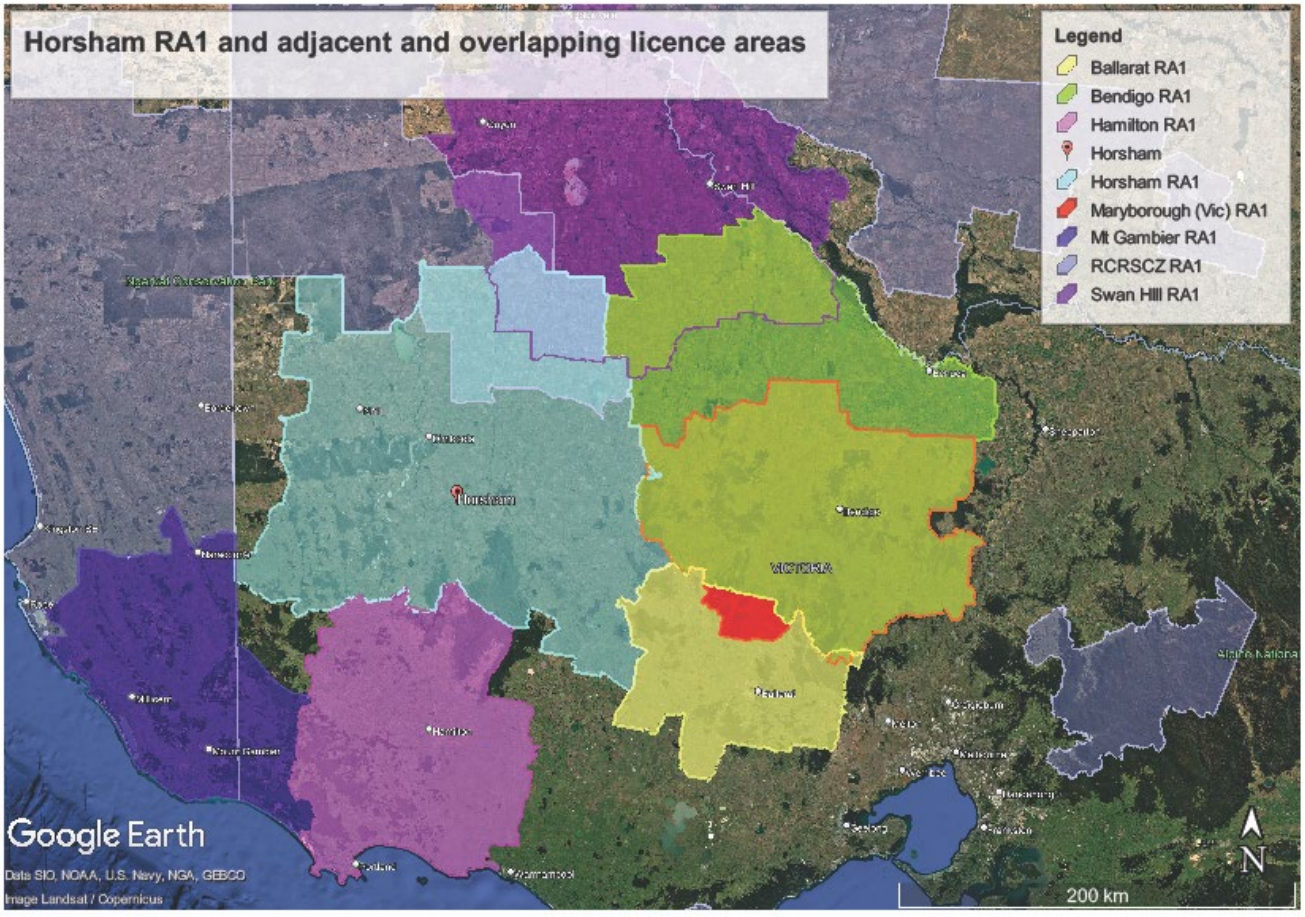
Information on the *Privacy Act 1988*, how to access or correct personal information, how to make a privacy complaint and how we will deal with any complaints, is available in our privacy policy.

Appendix A: Map of Horsham RA1 licence area



Appendix B: Map of Horsham RA1 and adjacent and overlapping licence areas

RCRSCZ RA1 refers to Remote Commercial Radio Service Central Zone RA1.



Appendix C: Map of Horsham RA2 licence area