

Proposal to remake the Radiocommunications (Aircraft and Aeronautical Mobile Stations) Class Licence 2016

Consultation paper

JUNE 2026

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Background

Under Part 4 of Chapter 3 of the [Legislation Act 2003](#), unless an exemption applies, most legislative instruments 'sunset'. This means they are automatically repealed on either 1 April or 1 October, whichever first occurs 10 years after they are registered. This is an automatic process applying to the legislative instruments affected regardless of their content.

This legislative instrument is due to sunset:

Name of instrument	Sunset date
Radiocommunications (Aircraft and Aeronautical Mobile Stations) Class Licence 2016 (2016 class licence)	1 October 2026

The 2016 class licence is operating effectively and efficiently. It continues to form a necessary and useful part of the legislative framework.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) proposes to remake (with minor changes) the 2016 class licence in a new instrument before its sunset. We also propose to rename it the **Radiocommunications (Aircraft and Aeronautical Mobile Stations) Class Licence 2026** (2026 class licence).

Overview of the 2016 class licence

The 2016 class licence is made under subsection 132(1) of the [Radiocommunications Act 1992](#) (the Act). The subsection provides that the ACMA may, by legislative instrument, issue class licences. Subsection 132(2) provides that a class licence authorises any person:

- a) to operate a radiocommunications device of a specified kind
- b) to operate a radiocommunications device for a specified purpose
- c) to operate a radiocommunications device of a specified kind for a specified purpose.

The 2016 class licence authorises the operation of aircraft stations on shared frequencies that are onboard aircraft, including recreational aircraft such as ultralights, hang gliders and gyrocopters.

The 2016 class licence also authorises the operation of aeronautical mobile services stations on shared frequencies. These stations are ground-based mobile stations operated for purposes relating to the operation of aircraft, or airport or aerodrome operations. Examples of such stations are those located on aircraft tugs or baggage vehicles.

Proposed changes to the 2016 class licence

We consider the 2016 class licence is operating effectively and forms a necessary part of the legislative framework. This is because it maintains the class licensing arrangements for both aircraft and aeronautical mobile stations that have been in place for many years.

We recognise that there have been technological and regulatory developments since the 2016 class licence was made. We are taking this opportunity to make several changes to the class licence to ensure that the proposed 2026 class licence reflects those developments.

We propose to remake the 2016 class licence with only the minor changes that are summarised below.

Revised, removed or new definitions

We propose to make the following changes to definitions in section 4 of the 2016 class licence:

- Replace the definition of ‘charter purposes’ with a new definition of ‘air transport operation’, which refers to the [Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998](#). This reflects legislative changes made in 2021 to civil aviation arrangements¹.
- Replace ‘nationality mark’ and ‘registration mark’ with ‘markings’, for consistency with regulation 45.015 in the [Civil Aviation Regulations 1998](#) (Civil Aviation Regulations).
- Make a formatting change and include 2 notes to the definition of ‘aero club’. The main note acknowledges that some aero clubs, which are clubs for activities involving full scale aircraft, may also operate model aircraft as part of their activities. Proposed changes in Table 2 of Schedule 1 to the 2026 class licence will make it clear that 119.1 MHz must not be used for communications to and from model aircraft.
- Include definitions for ‘aircraft EPIRB’, ‘AS/NZS 4280.1’, ‘AS/NZS 4280.2’ and ‘satellite distress beacon’. The added definitions relate to conditions we propose to include that apply to aircraft emergency position indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs).
- Include a new expression, ‘Aerodrome Rescue and Fire Fighting Service (ARFFS)’ and its definition for the operation of radiocommunications devices for these purposes. This aligns with operational practice (see Table 1 in the 2026 class licence).
- Change the expression of, and definition for, ‘Aeronautical Information Publication’ to reflect the making of the [Air Services Regulations 2019](#).
- Update the definition of ‘aeronautical mobile station’ to remove ‘other than an aeronautical licence (aeronautical assigned system station)’. This is because we have issued only one type of aeronautical licence for several years. We propose to remove the definition of that station type, which is not needed in the 2026 class licence. We also propose to remove references to frequencies from the definition. This is because it is a condition of the 2026 class licence that aeronautical mobile stations operate on specified frequencies so it is unnecessary to replicate this in a definition. We propose to remove references to frequencies in the definition of ‘aircraft station’ for the same reason.

¹ [Repealed flight operations legislation | Civil Aviation Safety Authority](#).

- Remove the definition of ‘ARPANSA standard’ and include that expression in Note 2 to section 4 of the 2026 class licence, as it is defined in the [Radiocommunications \(Interpretation\) Determination 2025](#).
- Change the definition of ‘ICAO’ so that it is consistent with the definition in the [Air Navigation Act 1920](#).

Authorisation of aircraft EPIRBs

The 2016 class licence authorises the operation of EPIRBs on an aircraft. To make this clearer, we have included definitions (referred to above) and conditions that are specific to such EPIRBs. These conditions specify the frequencies upon which they can operate, the purposes for which they can operate, and the standards that apply (see section 15 of the 2026 class licence).

Purposes for which aircraft EPIRBs can operate include self-testing and operational testing. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has a policy on its website about testing such devices. The 2026 class licence includes a condition that adopts aspects of that policy. However, changes are expected to AMSA’s beacon testing policy in the near future. Where appropriate, these changes will be reflected within the 2026 class licence.

Compliance with specifications, equipment compliance requirements, standards and equipment rules

Subsection 6(1) of the 2016 class licence includes a condition about compliance with standards that were in force before the commencement of the [Radiocommunications Legislation Amendment \(Reform and Modernisation\) Act 2020](#) (Modernisation Act). Following the making of the Modernisation Act, we no longer make standards under section 162 of the Act. Instead, Schedules 4 and 5 to the [Radiocommunications Equipment \(General\) Rules 2021](#) sets out the requirements to be met by radiocommunications devices. We propose to include a Note to the relevant section in the 2026 class licence (section 8) referring to the requirements under Part 4.1 of the Act.

In addition to the requirements referred to above, subsection 6(2) of the 2016 class licence includes a requirement for Class B shipborne equipment to comply with AS/ZNZS IEC 62287.1:2007. We propose to replace that reference with IEC 62287-1:2017, which is the current standard. For consistency purposes, we also propose to include a requirement for Class A shipborne equipment to comply with IEC 61993-2:2018.

Station identification

We propose to amend paragraph 8(1)(a) of the 2016 class licence to include ‘markings except for the hyphen’. This is because while the definition of ‘markings’ in the Civil Aviation Regulations refers to a hyphen, it is not pronounced. We also propose to include additional text to explain when the identification of the station should occur.

Operations outside Australia (aircraft stations)

We propose to amend the first Note in section 10 of the 2016 class licence to refer to the [Radiocommunications \(Interpretation\) Determination 2025](#).

Frequencies for operation

Operation on high frequencies – aircraft stations

We propose to remove Part 1.1 of Schedule 1, which are the frequencies specified for surveying and general use. This is because the inclusion of these frequencies is historical. Having consulted with Airservices Australia, we consider they are no longer needed.

Operation on very high frequencies – aircraft stations and aeronautical mobile stations

In Part 1.2 of Schedule 1, we propose to include additional frequencies for specified purposes.

This includes frequency 131.0 MHz for the purpose of ‘Aerodrome Rescue and Fire Fighting Services (ARFFS)’. This terminology is consistent with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority’s [Manual of Standards Part 139H - Standards Applicable to the Provision of Aerodrome Rescue and Fire Fighting Services](#).

We also propose to include the following frequencies for the purpose of search and rescue training activities, to reflect operational practice:

- 121.4 MHz
- 121.65 MHz
- 121.775 MHz.

In addition, we propose to replace the references to ‘charter purposes’ with references to ‘air transport operations’ for consistency with the changes we propose to make to the definitions section of the 2016 class licence, explained above.

Operation on radionavigation frequencies – aircraft stations

We propose to replace 2 purpose descriptions, ‘Secondary Surveillance RADAR’ (SSR) and ‘Airborne Collision Avoidance System (reply)’ (ACAS) with ‘Transponder’ in Part 1.3 of the 2016 class licence. This is to reflect that it is the transponder that operates on 1090 MHz in response to SSR and ACAS interrogations.

Operation on radionavigation frequencies – aeronautical mobile stations

We propose to remove Item 2 in Part 1.4 of Schedule 1 of the 2016 class licence, which referred to ‘Advanced Surface Movement Guidance and Control Systems – Reply’ because the item is not required. This is because the reply is not transmitted from an aeronautical mobile station but from a fixed station.

Other minor changes

We propose to make other stylistic and formatting changes that we consider are appropriate. For example, in the 2016 class licence, the purpose for which a particular frequency must be used is specified in Schedule 1. In some cases, a note or the purpose includes an additional limitation, such as a flight level. Where that is the case, we have specified the additional limitation separately for certainty.

A draft of the 2026 class licence, which incorporates the proposed changes, is available alongside this paper on the ACMA website.

Invitation to comment

Making a submission

Comments are sought from the public regarding the ACMA's proposal to remake the legislative instrument referred to above, without any significant changes, on the basis that it is operating effectively and efficiently.

- [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
Law Courts
Melbourne VIC 8010

The closing date for submissions is 5 pm (AEST) on Tuesday 21 July 2026.

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

Publication of submissions

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