

Cost Recovery Implementation Statement

Maritime certificates of proficiency, handbooks and associated administrative services for 2026 calendar year

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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
Pyrmont NSW

PO Box Q500
Queen Victoria Building
NSW 1230

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

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

This Cost Recovery Implementation Statement (CRIS) provides information on how the Australian Maritime College (the AMC) implements cost recovery charging for providing regulatory services relating to:

- marine radio certificates of proficiency
- marine radio operators handbook
- marine very high frequency (VHF) radio operators handbook.

Each fee cost recovered by the AMC is reviewed to ensure consistency with the Australian Government policy objectives and the principles of the [Australian Government Charging Framework](#) (Charging Framework). This CRIS reports actual financial and non-financial performance information on services provided by the AMC. It also includes the AMC's estimated financial position for the 2026 and 2027 calendar year, up to 31 July 2027. The ACMA will maintain the CRIS until the activities undertaken by the AMC, or cost recovery for those activities, have been discontinued.

1.2. Background and description of the regulatory charging activity

The ACMA is a statutory authority within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts portfolio of the Australian Government. We are Australia's regulator for broadcasting, radiocommunications, telecommunications and interactive gambling, amongst other functions.

The mandate of the ACMA includes the responsibility to maximise the overall public benefit derived from the radiofrequency spectrum by ensuring its efficient allocation and use. The ACMA regulates the use of radiofrequency spectrum in accordance with the [Radiocommunications Act 1992](#) (the Act) and other applicable legislation.

1.2.1. Marine radio certificates of proficiency

Article 47 of the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Radio Regulations requires that the operation of a ship station or ship earth station using the frequencies and techniques for the global maritime distress and safety system (GMDSS) be controlled by an operator holding a certificate issued or recognised by the government to which the station is subject. In Australia, the following rules apply under the Act and subordinate legislation:

- for stations operating solely on frequencies above 30 MHz, operators of maritime ship stations under an apparatus licence or class licence are required to hold a relevant Australian marine radio operator's certificate of proficiency or an equivalent overseas qualification
- holders of maritime coast licences must hold a relevant Australian marine radio operator's certificate of proficiency or an equivalent overseas qualification
- ship stations that are operating solely on 27 MHz band frequencies do not need a certificate of proficiency
- those operating on (very high frequency) VHF frequencies in Australian territorial seas and inland waters are required to hold an Australian Waters Qualification (AWQ).

1.2.2. Marine radio proficiency examinations

Section 119 of the Act allows the ACMA to determine the need for qualified operators for any class of transmitter licence. The [Radiocommunications \(Qualified Operators – Maritime\) Determination 2026](#) sets out that for the purposes of section 119 of the Act, with some exceptions, a person must be a qualified operator to operate a transmitter under the following classes of licence (known as marine transmitter licences):

- maritime coast licences that authorise a person to operate:
 - a limited coast assigned system station
 - a limited coast marine rescue station
 - a limited coast non assigned station
 - a major coast station
- maritime ship licences that authorise a person to operate a ship station Class B.

A person is only a qualified operator if they hold a certificate of proficiency issued by the ACMA under section 121 of the Act. Under section 122 of the Act, the ACMA can only issue certificates of proficiency if the ACMA is satisfied that the applicant has reached the minimum age in relation to that class of certificates and achieved satisfactory results in approved examinations or is satisfied, upon reasonable grounds, that the applicant would probably achieve such results. The definition of approved examinations includes an examination conducted by a body or organisation approved by the ACMA.

1.3. Provision of services relating to marine radio activities

Section 122A of the Act allows the ACMA to delegate the power to issue certificates of proficiency. This delegation may be made to a body or organisation approved to conduct examinations.

Under section 122A of the Act, the ACMA has delegated the power to issue certificates of proficiency to the AMC.

Section 298A of the Act allows the ACMA to determine that a body or organisation authorised to conduct approved examinations consistent with paragraph 122(2)(b) 'may charge fees for performing its functions under' the Act. Section 298A also provides that such a fee must not amount to taxation. The ACMA has made such a determination in relation to the AMC.

The AMC is part of the University of Tasmania (UTAS). The Commonwealth, represented by the Chair of the ACMA, has entered into a Deed of Agreement (the Deed) with UTAS regarding the conduct of examinations and the issue of certificates of proficiency. The Deed is in force until 31 July 2027.

As a body approved to conduct examinations and as the ACMA's delegate to issue certificates of proficiency, the AMC undertakes all related activities permitted under the legislation ensuring that services and delivery methods remain relevant to the marine boating community. The AMC is also responsible for related administrative activities, including managing databases of qualified marine radio operators and invigilators, issuing letters confirming certification for superseded qualifications, conducting special examinations and processing applications accompanied by a Unit of Competency (UoC).

The Australian Government uses cost recovery arrangements to fund certain activities that may include the provision of goods, services or regulation, or a combination of them.¹ The underlying principle of the policy is to allow entities to set charges to recover the full costs of products or services where it is efficient and effective to do so, where the beneficiaries are a narrow and identified group, and where charging is consistent with Australian Government policy objectives. The cost recovery policy is aimed to improve consistency, transparency and accountability of cost recovery arrangements and to promote the efficient allocation of resources.

The Commonwealth does not reimburse the AMC for the services provided under the Deed. In accordance with the Radiocommunications (Ability to Charge Fees – Australian Maritime College) Determination 2002 made by the ACMA under section 298A of the Act, the AMC charges fees to members of the public for performing its functions under the Act. The AMC also independently charges fees for services that are not functions under the Act.

Under the Deed, the AMC has agreed that it will only charge fees, whether or not for performing its functions under the Act, on a cost recovery basis. Any such fees must be approved in writing by the ACMA.

1.4. Stakeholders

Marine Radio operators are the primary stakeholders of the services provided by the AMC. These stakeholders self-identify by approaching the AMC for examinations and certificates of proficiency, and related administrative services, and therefore bear the associated fee. In 2025, the AMC received 6,047 applications for certificates of proficiency, including re-issuance of certificates and UoC applications. The AMC forecast a similar number of applications in 2026.

¹ [Australian Government Charging Framework](#).

2. Policy and statutory authority to charge (cost recovery)

2.1. Government policy approval to charge for this regulatory activity

As an outcome of the former Department of Communications and the Arts' Portfolio Charging Review in the 2019–20 financial year and, more recently, the amendments made to the Act by the [Radiocommunications Legislation Amendment \(Reform and Modernisation\) Act 2020](#), the Australian Government confirmed the appropriateness of the cost-recovery arrangements for the charging activities outlined in this CRIS.

2.2. Statutory authority to charge

Section 298A of the Act enables the ACMA to determine that a specified body or organisation, approved by the ACMA to conduct approved examinations, may charge fees for performing its functions under the Act.

The ACMA has determined that the AMC may charge fees for performing its functions under the Act by making the Radiocommunications (Ability to Charge Fees – Australian Maritime College) Determination 2002 under section 298A of the Act.

2.3. Cost recovery arrangements

Under clauses 6.1 and 6.2 of the Deed, the AMC must charge fees on a cost recovery basis. Fees must be approved in writing by the ACMA and must be reasonably related to actual expenses incurred (or to be incurred) by the AMC in relation to the matters to which the fee relates.

The AMC sets fees associated with the issue of marine radio certificates of proficiency, which include:

- the conduct of examinations
- the conduct of special examinations
- the issue of certificates of proficiency
- the reissue of certificates of proficiency or letters confirming certification
- the maintenance of a database of all qualified marine radio operators.

To demonstrate that the fees are set on a cost recovery basis, the AMC must provide the ACMA with its audited annual financial report each year (paragraph 2.4(d) of the Deed).

The AMC must also prepare and provide any information required to fulfil the obligations of the Charging Framework (paragraph 2.4(a) of the Deed). The ACMA conducts an annual review to ensure appropriateness of costs recovered and to assess the reasonableness of any over or under recovery in line with the Charging Framework and the Deed.

3. Charging (cost recovery) model

3.1. Outputs and business processes of the activity

The functions performed by the AMC under the Act are:

- issuing Marine Radio Certificates of Proficiency under section 121 of the Act
- conducting examinations as an approved body or organisation for the purposes of section 122 of the Act
- referring applications for Marine Radio Certificates of Proficiency to the ACMA under subsection 122A(2) of the Act where the AMC has decided not to issue the certificate, together with their reasons for that decision.

3.1.1. Marine radio certificates of proficiency

There are 3 types of certificates relating to marine radio operator qualifications:

- Long Range Operator Certificate of Proficiency – LROCP
- Short Range Operator Certificate of Proficiency – SROCP
- Marine Satellite Communications Certificate of Endorsement – MSCCE.

Examinations are conducted under the supervision of an invigilator and may be taken either on an independent basis or as part of a course offered by a training provider.

3.1.2. Certificate of Proficiency Re-issue and Letters Confirming Certification

The AMC reissues certificates of proficiency or issues letters confirming certification for people whose certificates are no longer legible or have been misplaced. The letters confirming certification are issued where the same qualification is no longer available.

3.1.3. UoC

The AMC is not required to conduct any examinations for applicants requiring a marine radio certificate of proficiency who have already received a statement of attainment (that is, UoC) from a registered training organisation following completion of relevant training. However, the AMC does need to verify and process their application and issue a certificate of proficiency if the requirements are met.

3.1.4. Marine radio operator's handbook (MRO handbooks) and marine radio operator's VHF handbook (MV handbooks)

Under the Deed, the AMC is required to:

- produce and distribute the marine radio operators' handbooks which encompass the syllabi for the respective certificates of proficiency
- undertake promotional activities to ensure the handbooks are widely known, promoted and accessible within the marine boating community
- consult with the marine industry and marine education stakeholders to ensure that the syllabi remains relevant and consistent with the marine radio regulatory framework.

3.1.5. Administrative services

Administrative services that are provided by AMC under the Deed are:

- development and maintenance of ACMA approved application forms accessible both in hard copy and online
- development of appropriate syllabi that is compliant with the relevant legislation
- development and management of the examination and assessment process including determining assessment methods, examination questions, distribution methods of examinations or access to competency-based assessment methods
- provision and management of special examinations
- source, approve and manage examination invigilators
- produce, issue and maintain records of certificates of proficiency that meet regulatory requirements, including International Telecommunication Union (ITU) guidelines
- produce and maintain, including the revision of handbooks relevant to each certificate of proficiency, ensuring consistency with regulatory requirements
- promote and distribute handbooks in hard copy and electronic form
- develop and maintain relevant databases including:
 - a complete record of holders of marine radio certificates of proficiency
 - a database of authorised examiners, if applicable
- manage enquiries and complaints matters pertaining to marine radio certificates of proficiency
- undertake promotional activities relating to marine radio certificates of proficiency, the requirement for qualification, the examination process and handbooks
- maintain all records in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation and the Deed
- engage with key marine and educational organisations to ensure external views are considered on relevant matters including syllabi, examination processes and handbook content and format
- provide accurate and timely reports as required by the ACMA, in formats agreed with the ACMA
- develop and manage a pricing regime consistent with the Charging Framework
- maintain business rules
- undertake continuous quality and process improvement review
- making recommendations to the ACMA on the approval of examinations and
- making recommendations to the ACMA on the approval by the ACMA of bodies and organisations to conduct examinations.

3.2. Costs of the regulatory activity

In accordance with cost recovery principles, the AMC sets its fees based on the costs of providing the relevant services. These costs include all applicable direct costs and support costs attributable to these services.

Direct costs are those costs that can be directly attributed to the service provision, including:

- direct labour costs, such as staff salary and wage costs
- direct materials costs, such as:
 - application processing and assessment costs
 - handbook production, promotion and dispatch costs
 - investigation, development and administration costs for online examinations.

Support costs comprise departmental overhead contributions and other overhead costs, including accommodation, systems development and maintenance, corporate support functions (such as finance, human resources, marketing, legal and senior management), and other costs which cannot be directly attributed to each of the services provided. These costs are allocated across services on a proportional basis. UTAS determines the allocation methodology and applies appropriate cost drivers (including service volumes and the proportion of staff time spent on related administrative activities) to apportion overheads to each service.

3.3. Design of the regulatory charge

Table 1 shows the current fee structure approved by the ACMA, which has been in place since 6 October 2025.

Table 1: Current fee structure

Services	Current fee (excl. GST)	Current Fee (incl. GST)
Examinations	\$89.00	\$97.90
Re-issue	\$35.00	\$38.50
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	\$49.01	\$53.91
SROCP Handbook	\$16.50	\$18.15
LROCP Handbook	\$45.00	\$49.50

3.4. Changes to existing charges

The AMC and the ACMA have closely monitored the costs and revenue associated with the AMC's activities and forecast that the AMC's expenses will increase. The key cost drivers include higher staffing costs, increased stakeholder engagement activity, and higher software and information technology expenses associated with increased demand for online examinations.

The AMC forecasts an under-recovery of costs for these activities over the remainder of the Deed term. The fee increase is intended to reduce accumulated under-recovery by the end of the Deed in July 2027. Further information is provided in section 6 of this CRIS.

Based on the current and estimated financial positions, a 10% increase to fees will be effective from November 2026. The AMC's financial position for the 2026 calendar year will be reviewed in early 2027, along with updated forecast revenue and expenses. If necessary, the ACMA might propose a further fee adjustment to support a cumulative cost recovery neutral position by the end of the Deed term, consistent with the Australian Government Cost Recovery Policy. The ACMA will undertake stakeholder consultation before implementing any additional fee changes.

Table 2: New fee schedule with 10% increase effective from November 2026

Services	New fee (excl GST)	New fee (incl GST) ¹
Examinations	\$97.90	\$108.00
Re-issue	\$38.50	\$43.00
RPL	\$53.91	\$60.00
SROCP Handbook	\$18.15	\$20.00
LROCP Handbook	\$49.50	\$55.00

1. All amounts are rounded up to the nearest dollar.

4. Risk assessment

We have carried out a risk assessment for this cost-recovery arrangement during the review process, based on the assessment of the criteria in the Department of Finance Charging Risk Assessment.

The overall rating given to this cost-recovery arrangement is medium.

Table 3: Risk assessment

Assessment component	Implementation risk	Risk rating
What is the expected percentage change in total annual revenue after the proposed changes?	Total annual revenue for the 2026 calendar year is projected to increase by less than 10% after the proposed change.	Low
What is the expected change in total annual revenue after the proposed changes?	The proposed change is expected to increase total annual revenue by approximately \$0.02 million for the 2026 calendar year.	Low
What is the highest percentage increase in price a payer [†] may experience?	The proposed fee increase is 10% effective from November 2026.	Medium
What type of charges are changing?	Fees only	Low
What does the revised proposal involve?	Change in the amount of existing regulatory charges only.	Low
Does the revision require legislative changes? Primary legislation (enabling Act or taxation Act) Subordinate legislation (Regulations, Determinations)	Existing legislative mechanisms are in place. There is no need for subordinate legislation to be amended.	Low
What will the impact on payers [†] be?	Increase in fees by 10% would impact approximately 6,000 future applicants to the AMC for certificates of proficiency or related services.	Medium
Does the proposal involve working with other Commonwealth, State/Territory and/or local government entities?	No.	Low
What consultation has occurred with payers and other stakeholders about the proposed charges?	Consulted – no concerns were raised.	Low
Overall CRA rating		Medium

5. Stakeholder engagement

To maintain active engagement with stakeholders, we published a draft CRIS on the ACMA's website from 15 June to 6 July 2026 and sought comments from public on the proposed charges. No submissions were received from the public in response to the consultation.

6. Financial performance

6.1. Financial actuals

Table 4 presents revenue and expenses on a calendar-year basis. The AMC has provided the financial information set out in Table 4 for the 2022 to 2025 reporting periods.

Table 4: Actual cost-recovery revenue and expenses

Financial item	2022 (\$million)	2023 (\$million)	2024 (\$million)	2025 (\$million)
Examinations and postage	0.32	0.33	0.33	0.34
UoC	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.08
Reissue	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
MRO Handbooks	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03
MV Handbooks	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.05
Total revenue (A)¹	0.50	0.50	0.51	0.50
Direct labour	0.22	0.21	0.28	0.31
Direct materials	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.09
Department overhead contribution	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23
Other overheads	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
Total expenses (B)¹	0.51	0.52	0.59	0.63
Balance (A - B)¹	-0.01	-0.02	-0.08	-0.13
Cumulative balance¹	0.14	0.12	0.03	-0.10

1. Totals might not reconcile due to rounding.

6.2. Financial estimates

The AMC estimated revenue and expenditure, based on current fee structure (prior to the implementation of the fee changes), is presented in Table 5. Forecast revenue reflects the growth in service volumes. Forecast expenditure reflects the costs of delivering the services.

Table 5: Estimated financial position with current fees

Financial item	2026 (\$million)	2027 ¹ (\$million)
Examinations and postage	0.35	0.21
UoC	0.08	0.05
Reissue	0.02	0.01
MRO Handbooks	0.03	0.02
MV Handbooks	0.05	0.03
Total revenue (A)²	0.53	0.31
Direct labour	0.32	0.19
Direct materials	0.10	0.06
Department overhead contribution ³	0.23	0.14
Total expenses (B)²	0.65	0.38
Balance (A - B)²	-0.12	-0.07
Cumulative balance²	-0.22	-0.29

1. The 2027 figures reflect a part-year financial position for the period ending 31 July 2027, which corresponds to the end of the Deed.

2. Totals might not reconcile due to rounding.

3. From 2025, other overheads have been reported within direct materials.

As noted above, if fees remain unchanged, the AMC forecasts a cumulative deficit of \$0.22 million at 31 December 2026, increasing to a deficit of \$0.29 million by the end of the Deed in July 2027.

The forecast calculations are based on the following:

- Service volume:
 - Examinations (SROCP and LROCP): SROCP volumes are forecast to increase by 5% per annum, while LROCP volumes are forecast to decrease by 5% per annum as Marine Rescue groups transition from LROCP to SROCP.
 - MSCCE examinations: no examinations are forecast for 2026 and 2027 calendar year, consistent with 2025 calendar year.
 - UoC: volumes are forecast to increase by 5% per annum. It is anticipated that a greater number of Recognised Training Operators (including TAFEs) will conduct examinations and issue the VET certificate. The AMC will verify and issue the marine radio certificates of proficiency on receipt of the applicable fee.
 - Re-issue of certificates: forecast to increase by 3% per annum.

- Handbooks: MRO demand is forecast to increase by 5% per annum, while MV demand is forecast to decrease by 5% per annum, reflecting reduced demand for LROCP.
- Revenue:
 - Overall, revenue is forecast to increase modestly in 2026 under the current fee settings. This increase is primarily driven by higher forecast service volumes and the fee adjustment implemented in October 2025.
- Expenses:
 - Direct labour: staff costs incorporate annual salary increments in accordance with current UTAS staff Award Agreements, including a 5% increase in each year.
 - Direct materials: Increased costs are primarily attributable to enhanced stakeholder engagement, higher handbook printing costs, and software licence and maintenance costs associated with growing demand for online examinations.
 - Departmental overhead costs are forecast to remain consistent with the 2025 calendar year.

Table 6 presents the estimated financial position following the implementation of a 10% fee increase, effective from November 2026.

Table 6: Estimated financial position with a 10% fee increase effective from November 2026

Financial item	2026 ¹ (\$million)	2027 ² (\$million)
Examinations and postage	0.37	0.23
Units of Competency	0.09	0.06
Reissue	0.02	0.01
MRO Handbooks	0.03	0.02
MV Handbooks	0.05	0.03
Total revenue (A)³	0.55	0.34
Direct labour	0.32	0.19
Direct materials	0.10	0.06
Department overhead contribution	0.23	0.14
Total expenses (B)³	0.65	0.38
Balance (A - B)³	-0.10	-0.04
Cumulative balance³	-0.20	-0.24

1. Includes current fees through 31 August 2026 and the part-year impact of 10% fee increase from November 2026.

2. The AMC Deed expires on 31 July 2027.

3. Totals might not reconcile due to rounding.

The AMC's 2026 financial results, together with the updated revenue and expense forecasts, will be reviewed early next year. This review will determine whether any further fee increases are required.

7. Non-financial performance

In the 2025 calendar year, the AMC delivered 3,969 examinations, with an average pass rate of 98%. In the same period, the AMC issued a total of 3,692 certificates and sold 2,812 handbooks.

Compared to the 2024 calendar year, total applications received decreased by 3% in 2025, and the number of examinations undertaken decreased by 4%. The pass rate remained stable at 98%, however, the number of certificates issued reduced by 9%.

Online assessments, introduced in August 2022, continued to be well received in 2025, with positive feedback from both invigilators and candidates.

Handbook sales continued to decline in 2025 (approximately 2% lower than in 2024). This decline is expected to continue and reflects changes in the AMC's examination processes and the broader shift to digital delivery. In particular, the move to online examinations and the availability of the handbook in digital form have reduced demand for physical copies.

No direct marketing activities were undertaken during 2025. However, AMC staff attended the four-day Sydney International Boat Show, where they engaged with members of the public and industry representatives to discuss certification and related matters, and to distribute promotional materials. Throughout the year, AMC also fulfilled requests from various volunteer marine rescue organisations for brochures and VHF stickers for distribution in local areas.

The AMC received no complaints during 2025 regarding the performance of its functions under the Deed.

8. Key forward dates and events

The key forward events and dates for this CRIS update are set out in Table 7.

Table 7: Key forward dates and events

Key events	Indicative date
Next scheduled update of financial outcomes	March 2027
Next scheduled portfolio charging review	2026–27 (currently in progress)
Expiry of Deed with AMC	31 July 2027

9. CRIS approval and change register

Implementation year	Date of change	CRIS change	Approver	Comments
2026	23 Sep 2026	Approval of the CRIS for the 2026 calendar year	Minister for Communications	CRIS update
	3 August 2026	Certification of the CRIS for the 2026 calendar year	ACMA Chair and Agency Head	CRIS update
	15 June to 6 July 2026	Consultation on the draft CRIS	ACMA Authority	Proposed 10% fee increase
2025	11 Sep 2025	Approval of the CRIS for the 2025 calendar year	Minister for Communications	CRIS update
	14 Aug 2025	Certification of the CRIS for the 2025 calendar year	ACMA Chair and Agency Head	CRIS update
	10 to 31 Jul 2025	Consultation on the draft CRIS	ACMA Chair and Agency Head	Proposed 10% fee increase