



**INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR RADIO UNION**  
**REGION 3**  
**TWELFTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE**



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**New era for Amateur Service in Australia**

Following the World Radiocommunications Conference 2003, the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) announced a full-scale review of the Amateur Service.

The review concerns the matters affecting the Amateur Service arising out WRC-03, plus a number of domestic issues.

The ACA issued a 50-page discussion paper "A Review of Amateur Service Regulation" in August 2003, which contained a series of proposals to be considered during a two-two-month period of consultation involving the amateur radio community and other interested parties.

The ACA held ten public meetings in cities throughout Australia and called for written submissions. At the close of the community comment period at the end of October 2003 the ACA had received around 1400 written submissions from individual radio amateurs, radio clubs and the WIA. These have been published on the ACA website.

This review represents the most important turning point for the Amateur Service in Australia, a "once in a century" occasion to review the licensing and regulations, plus an opportunity to look at the future direction for the Amateur Service.

In Australia, the Amateur Service has experienced a considerable decline in the number of radio amateurs and in amateur examination candidates, which are of serious concern.

The ACA review is also an opportunity to seek better recognition by the ACA, governments and ordinary citizens of Australia of the enormous contributions and value provided by the Amateur Service.

In the past, the Amateur Service in Australia has had an important role to play in encouraging young people to begin technical and scientific education and careers, in providing communication services to community events and in times of emergencies, as well as providing an outlet for those with a personal interest in radiocommunication technologies and techniques.

Many of the ACA's proposals were welcome, including its decision to end Morse code tests for amateur licensing in Australia from 1 January, 2004. That will also result in the reduction or amalgamation of the existing five amateur licence types in Australia.

Other proposals were found to be unacceptable, including the ACA's proposed 'no interference' policy.

The ACA in its discussion paper had proposed tough action against amateur stations, including restrictions and closing down the station, where a neighbour complains about "interference", even if the amateur transmitter is not at fault.

The concern raised by the majority of those making submissions to the ACA review was that such a policy was unfair, because it appeared to be penalty on law-abiding radio amateurs.

In response to the decline in amateur station licences in Australia that has been occurring in recent years, the WIA has proposed a new Entry Level licence concept that has considerable support throughout the amateur radio fraternity.

Although there are some differences in opinion about the fine details of this new licence, it is strongly recognised for the potential benefits it will provide.

Entry Level licensees should be radio amateurs in the full terms outlined by the ITU definition of the Amateur Service, but the way in which they meet the required qualifications will not only be through a written examination, but also include other assessments of their knowledge and demonstrate operating abilities.

The ACA review also provides an opportunity to improve conditions to support the role of the Amateur Service in emergency and disaster communications, and the training for this important activity.

The ACA has been urged to consider additional frequency allocations for emergency communications, and to take action that will bring about Australia's ratification of the Tampere Convention on communications supporting humanitarian aid for disaster relief.

The ACA review is also looking at at the issuing of licences, certificates of proficiency, callsigns, and examinations, conducted under contract by a company or organisation.

The WIA is currently administering amateur examinations under an agreement with the ACA until 2005, and may be interested in expanding its role in the future.

The changes to the licensing and regulation of the Amateur Service flowing from the ACA review are due to occur in 2005.

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