

WIA Submission – Part 1: General principles

1.1 The Future of Amateur Licensing

The general principle guiding the WIA in this submission is that, during the introduction of new legislation, amateur licences should not be downgraded from the current position embodied within Apparatus licensing.

1.1.1 General principles of amateur licensing

<p>Under the prevailing licensing system, Australian radio amateurs are able to expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individual licences • certainty of licence tenure, with periodic renewal • certain and continuing access to frequency bands throughout the radiofrequency spectrum • defined technical parameters • certain and continuing participation in spectrum management processes at local, national and international levels. 	<p>Standard and Advanced licensees operate stations comprising equipment that may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designed and constructed by themselves • constructed from kits produced for the local or global amateur radio market • assembled from units of commercially manufactured equipment originally intended for commercial, government or defence applications, and adapted or modified for amateur radio pursuits • assembled from commercially manufactured equipment designed for the world amateur radio market • various combinations and permutations of the above.
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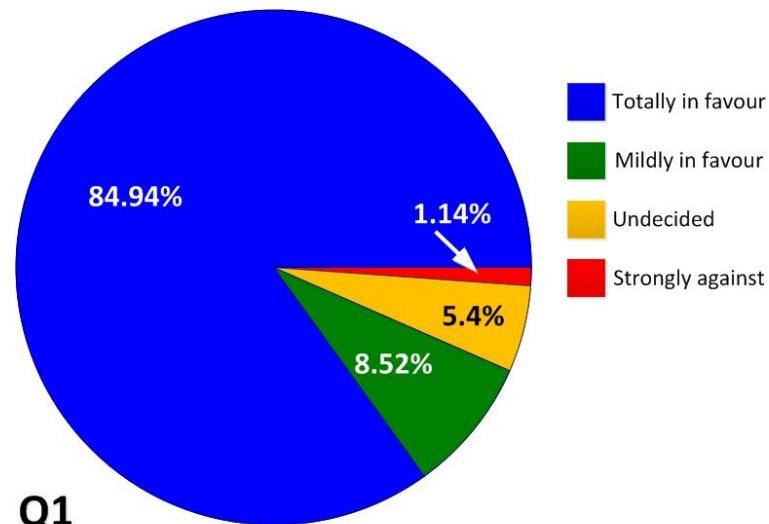
The WIA welcomes a discussion on licensing options in the case of the Foundation grade licence, with a view to reducing licensing costs.

1.1.2 WIA Survey: Item1 – Future of amateur licensing

It is understood that the new radiocommunications act will introduce a form of licence known as “parameters-based licensing”.

The WIA proposes that future amateur licensing must not be reduced or downgraded from the principles embodied in current Apparatus licensing.

Respondents were asked their view on this proposition, with a choice of four responses.



Future licensing not downgraded

N = 352	Totally in Favour	Mildly in Favour	Undecided	Strongly Against
No.	299	30	19	4
%	84.9	8.5	5.4	1.1

Q1

Future licensing not downgraded from current principles

Over 93% of respondents supported the view that Amateur licences should not be downgraded. Of those Opposed to the proposition, some held that future amateur licensing should be more stringent, while others took ‘Strongly Against’ to mean against downgrading. Among those Undecided who commented,

there was a view that related regulation (eg, EMI/RFI of electronic products) needed to be upgraded to combat RF noise.

WIA Recommendation:

That the status of Amateur Advanced and Standard grade licences not be downgraded from the current position embodied within Apparatus licensing.

1.2 Reducing regulation

The amateur radio hobby is highly regulated, in order to prevent interference between the amateur service and other radio communications services.

However, the pace of technological change has accelerated greatly and amateur licensees now find themselves restricted and often unable to experiment with the full range of technologies available. This impediment will become greater in the future as technology advances.

The WIA is of the view that there is scope to relax the technical regulations on the amateur service to allow licensees to take part in new and yet-to-emerge technologies, without the burden of overly restrictive regulation.

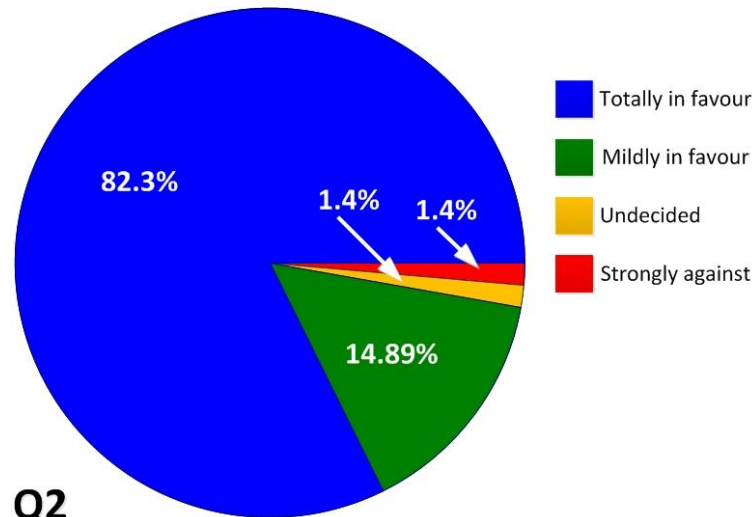
The WIA also believes there is scope for greater self-determination by the amateur service.

1.2.1 WIA Survey: Item 2 – Reducing regulation

Reducing regulation to provide greater self-determination for Amateur operators.

The WIA proposes that future amateur licence conditions must encourage and support every opportunity for amateurs, of whatever licence class, to explore, experiment and learn with the least possible impediment, balanced with responsible use of the radio spectrum and respect for other users.

Respondents were asked their view on this proposition, with a choice of four responses.



Q2

Reducing regulation to encourage experimenting & learning

Reducing regulation to provide greater self-regulation

	Totally in Favour	Mildly in Favour	Undecided	Strongly Against
N = 356				
No.	293	53	5	5
%	82.3	14.9	1.4	1.4

An overwhelming majority, more than 97% of respondents, supported a reduction in regulation to provide greater self-determination for the Australian amateur community. Of those Mildly in Favour, views were expressed concerning maintenance of conservative regulation. Those Strongly Against the proposition said that future amateur regulations should be more stringent than at present.

WIA Recommendation:

That the WIA and the ACMA explore options for greater self-determination by the amateur service, possibly by developing an industry code.

1.3 Review of permitted powers

Amateur operators in Australia are at a significant disadvantage compared to those in other countries, where administrations allow higher, or significantly higher, transmitted power.

The communications distances within Australia are generally greater than in many other countries. Our urban noise floors are steadily rising from the multitude of new electronic sources that generate EMI/RFI. Urban noise floors in other countries suffer the same problem.

The WIA believes that all licence classes would benefit from an increase in permitted power. This is particularly relevant in the case of Foundation licensees. Many other countries' radiocommunications administrations permit their radio amateur licensees greater transmission power than the current Australian amateur licence conditions.

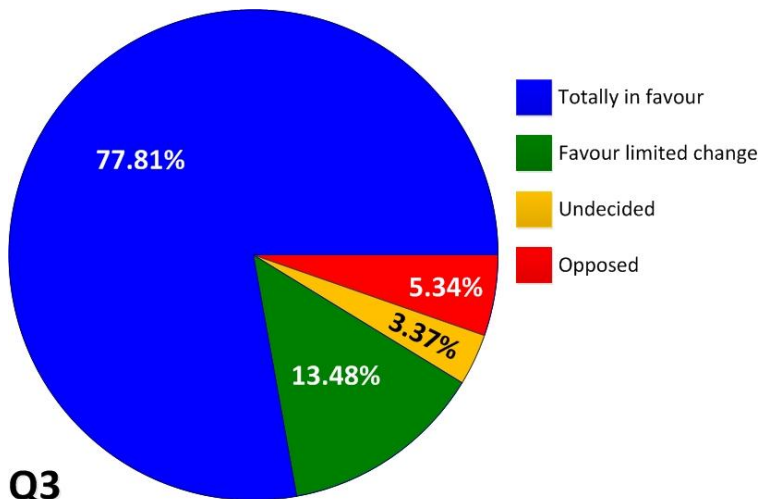
While there is interest within the radio amateur community in operating with 'low' powers (below 5 W pX/pY, for example), there are also those interested in the technologies, techniques and use of various power levels for communications, particularly under anomalous propagation conditions. In addition, some modes of communication, such as reflecting signals off passive space objects (eg, meteor trails, moon bounce), require power levels above the maximum currently permitted for the Advanced licence.

1.3.1 WIA Survey: Item 3 – Permitted powers

On-air conditions are affected to varying degrees by the 'fog' of electromagnetic interference from a multitude of sources. This seems set to continue and expand as the use of electronics and wireless technologies grows. Amateur operator interests and pursuits range across low power operations to high power techniques and operations.

The WIA proposes that permitted powers for all licence grades be reviewed in a sensible, pragmatic way to enable licensees to pursue their interests commensurate with their knowledge (as established in their AOCIP assessment or practice, education and experience), and within reasonable bounds of public and personal safety regarding electromagnetic emissions.

Respondents were asked their view, with a choice of four responses.



Review of permitted powers

	Totally in Favour	Favour Limited Change	Undecided	Opposed
N = 356				
No.	277	48	12	19
%	77.8	13.5	3.4	5.3

Over 91% of respondents supported sensible, pragmatic changes to the permitted power levels within the bounds of public safety. The general view of those Favouring Limited Change, was that caution necessitated increases be incremental. Those Opposed to change, expressed the view that current permitted powers were satisfactory. No view was expressed by those signifying Undecided, but they were otherwise in favour of change in response to the two prior questions.

WIA Recommendation:

The WIA's specific recommendations for increases in permitted powers for each licence grade are provided elsewhere in this submission.