



Mr. Nicholas Brody  
Acting Manager  
Spectrum Licensing Policy  
ACMA

*By email*

Dear Nic,

### **THREE LETTER SUFFIX CALLSIGNS FOR FOUNDATION CLASS AMATEURS**

As we discussed earlier this year, 4 letter suffix callsigns used by Foundation Licencees (FL) are not fully compatible with many popular radio data programs.

The software for the most popular digital mode – FT8, provides reduced functionality if the operator uses a 4 letter callsign, and does not allow communications between two stations using 4 letter callsigns.

Another of the popular digital modes – APRS, used for automated position reporting, does not accept 4 letter callsigns at all.

We have researched the technical background to these issues, and it appears that the developers are reticent to modify the software to allow 4 letter callsigns, given the small numbers of FL in comparison to total world-wide user numbers.

The logical solution is to assign FL a 3 letter callsign suffix. As we have previously advised, the Qxx block is the only one vacant. However, this block will only provide a stop gap arrangement for the populous states (NSW, Vic and Qld).

A longer-term solution will necessitate the use of a second prefix, such as VJ. However, a second prefix brings with it some complications: translation of two separate prefixes to AX for national events such as ANZAC day, and the way in which the individual callsign blocks are assigned.

In view of the complications and the need for cross-sector support, it is proposed that ACMA establish a sector committee to consider the issues and develop recommendations on a way ahead.

The committee should consist of representatives from the two peak bodies; RASA and the WIA. Given the importance of the issues to be discussed, the Presidents of both bodies should be members.

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We recommend that a committee of 5 is sufficient: 2 from each organisation, plus a chair.

It is also recommended that either ACMA or the Australian Maritime College, as the ACMA's outsourced provider, chair the committee.

As the problems outlined are impacting on current FL digital mode operations, it is requested that the committee be constituted as a matter of priority.

It is regrettable that we must resort to a formal approach, but unfortunately the WIA refuse to answer our emails or letters.

We would, of course, be willing to participate in a more flexible arrangement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G.C. Dunstan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

G.C. Dunstan  
President

02 October 2019

For information:

Mr. Greg Kelly  
President WIA