



Mr. Allan Major
Executive Manager
Licencing and Infrastructure Safeguards Branch
ACMA

By email

Dear Mr. Major,

CALLSIGN FORMATS FOR FOUNDATION CLASS AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS

I don't believe we have met.

My name is Glenn Dunstan, and I am the President of the Radio Amateur Society of Australia (RASAS) – one of the two peak bodies representing the amateur radio sector. I am also an advisor to the Australian Maritime College on amateur examination matters.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I write with reference to the recent granting of digital modes for Foundation class amateur radio operators. One of the consequences of these new privileges is that the four-letter suffix callsign format used by Foundation class amateurs is not compatible with two of the most popular software programs used by amateur radio operators.

We recently discussed this issue with Nicholas Brody and our colleagues from the other sector body, the Wireless Institute of Australia (WIA).

It was agreed that the current callsign format was non-standard, and needed to be changed. There are two replacement options:

- remove the current distinction between licence class and callsign suffix; or
- allocate a new prefix such as VJ with a three-letter suffix for Foundation class amateurs.

As both options represent significant change, Greg Kelly from the WIA and I agreed that the sector should be consulted through an on-line survey.

Greg and I discussed and agreed the wording of the survey and the method of dissemination via telephone calls and emails on the 3rd, the 9th, the 15th, the 17th, the 26th and the 28th of October.

Final agreement was reached on the 26th of October, after which the survey was opened via the RASA website, distributed by email broadcast and shared on numerous social media platforms. It was also shared by AR NSW and AR Vic, two large state-based clubs.

Greg and I discussed the survey on the 28th of October, two days after it was opened. He undertook to publish the survey on the WIA website that afternoon. It was not published.

Concerned by the lack of WIA publicity for the survey, I attempted to contact Greg via email on the 30th, phone on the 31st, and text message on the 1st of November, to no avail.

On the 1st of November, RASA received a very aggressive letter from the WIA Secretary, claiming that the WIA had never agreed to the survey and demanding that all references to their participation be removed. The letter included threats of legal action.

By that stage, the survey had received a large number of responses (974), was statistically significant and had a 99% confidence level, so we closed it.

There would be absolutely no point in publishing a joint survey if the other party did not agree to it. RASA published the survey in good faith, based on agreement between the two Presidents.

We went ahead with this survey in a spirit of cooperation, for the good of all amateurs. I was pleased that the politics were being put aside. Greg and I developed a good rapport over our numerous calls and emails.

The WIA published their letter to RASA online, and have, unfortunately, launched an irrational and defamatory anti-RASA smear campaign via their national radio broadcasts and web site.

The WIA's claims have no basis in fact, as any reasonable person would conclude.

The ill-advised actions of the WIA and their internal political machinations have seriously damaged cross-sector cooperation.

Last week, I had a discussion with Nicholas Brody regarding this issue and the WIA's general lack of cooperation. I understood from that phone call that ACMA's preferred position is that RASA and the WIA reach a consensus.

With this in mind, I sent an email to Greg Kelly last week requesting that the political differences between our organisations be put aside for the good of the hobby. I also proposed a meeting to seek a way forward. As you saw, I copied yourself and Nicholas on the email. I also copied the boards of both RASA and the WIA.

Unfortunately, I have received no reply to the email. Greg Kelly also still refuses to answer my phone calls or texts.

It is obvious that the WIA board are not willing to cooperate and are being deliberately obstructive.

As demonstrated by recent events, RASA is willing to cooperate with the WIA for the good of the sector. We have made every effort to reach out to the WIA in a spirit of compromise.

The WIA are unwilling to engage in dialog. They have, by their actions, forfeited the right to contribute to this issue.

We need to move forward, as Foundation class amateurs are not able to fully use their new privileges.

I understand that the ACMA seek an evidence-based process to demonstrate sector views.

RASA's charter requires that our policies be guided by sector views. We have conducted numerous online polls using the *Survey Monkey* on-line platform over the past two years.

As agreed by the WIA President and I, the nature of the amateur radio demographic does not suit traditional surveys that require an invitation by email alone.

Limiting the survey to email distribution disenfranchises those amateurs who aren't members of the WIA, RASA or radio clubs.

Short of sending a letter to every individual licensee, there is no other methodology available to seek sector views.

I recently wrote to Nicholas Brody regarding the survey. The survey platform allows the IP addresses of all respondents to be recorded and running totals to be observed in real time.

We analysed the addresses and found no evidence of fraudulent conduct or attempts to spam/influence the survey.

The distribution of responses remained relatively constant over the survey period, with only very minor variations. There was no particular spike in responses one way or another.

The survey had 974 responses – this represents statistical significance and exceeds the 99% confidence level and 5% margin of error specified by the survey provider.

A clear majority preferred the option of a new VJ prefix for Foundation class amateurs.

I understand from Nicholas that the AMCA are willing to implement either option from the survey.

Accordingly, given the need to provide Foundation class amateurs with full access to their new operating privileges, I request that the option of a new VJ prefix be implemented.

Should you wish to discuss this issue further, I may be contacted on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



G.C. Dunstan
President

20 November 2019