

Higher Power Operation

Hello, this is a simple submission from an operator's perspective. I am Paul Thomas McGuiness, VK2AMT. I started in this hobby in 2012 and progressed through the three licence classes with the help of my local amateur radio club, the Summerland Amateur Radio Club.

A few observations on the Foundation Licence. I feel that the syllabus relating to that licence class is inadequate. In particular, the Practical assessment doesn't meet the needs of a prospective operator and should include more practical skills. Soldering techniques is only one that comes to mind. The Foundation Licence power output level of 10 watts is a joke. I very nearly left the hobby because I could hardly be heard on HF. The noise we are dealing with is not decreasing. Imagine the frustration of a new operator trying to make themselves heard on a noisy HF band with a compromise antenna. I wonder how many potential operators have been lost to the hobby because of this. I was very nearly one of them. Ten watts may be fine in the UK, where the Australian licence conditions seem to have been largely lifted from, but it is definitely not adequate in Australia. In the UK Europe is close by. The ACMA is not helping the hobby of amateur radio by maintaining the current output power restrictions, it is hindering it.

The question of noise, QRN and QRM, is critical. Signal to noise ratio is, to my mind, one of the most important aspects of amateur radio operations. I would submit that the three licence classes need higher power to help deal with the noise. Not everyone lives in a rural area with plenty of room for towers and antenna arrays and a low noise floor. Most of live in suburbia in a sea of noise.

Foundation Licence – this should be 30 watts minimum, 50 watts would be better. Please give our prospective amateurs a fighting chance to be heard. We cannot afford to lose them.

Standard Licence – the output here should be 200 watts. The only really helpful changes from the Foundation Licence are the chance to use 100 watts and the right to use 20 metres. One extra band over a Foundation licensee – Wow!

Advanced Licence – I feel that this should be 1 kilowatt for SSB with progressively higher power levels for modes such as digital.

The cynic in me says that this call for submissions is not serious and that the ACMA has no intention of allowing higher power operations. Are conditions in the USA (1.5 kilowatts) and New Zealand (1 kilowatt) so different to Australia? The examples given of EME and Meteor Scatter modes (a special Scientific Licence allocation) is an indication that the ACMA will use any excuse, however specious, to hold us back. I hope that this is not the case and that the ACMA will give us a fighting chance.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

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