**Commonwealth of Australia**

**AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA AUTHORITY**

**Notice under subsection 136(1) of the *Radiocommunications Act 1992***

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSAL TO VARY THE *RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS (MARITIME SHIP STATION – 27 MHZ AND VHF) CLASS LICENCE 2015* BY MAKING THE *RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS LICENCE CONDITIONS (MARITIME LICENSING) AMENDMENT INSTRUMENT 2023* *(NO.1)*

Notice is given under subsection 136(1) of the *Radiocommunications Act 1992* (the Act) that the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) proposes to vary the R*adiocommunications (Maritime Ship Station – 27 MHz and VHF) Class Licence 2015* (Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence) by making the draft *Radiocommunications (Maritime Licensing) Amendment Instrument 2024 (No.1)* (the draft Instrument) under subsections 110A(2) and subsection 132(1) of the Act. The draft Instrument proposes to amend existing marine channel arrangements in the very high frequency (VHF) band by varying the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence.

**Proposed changes**

The international framework for maritime radio is established through the [International Telecommunication Union’s (ITU) Radio Regulations](https://www.itu.int/pub/R-REG-RR). The frequency allocations for the maritime mobile bands are detailed in [Article 5 of the ITU Radio Regulations](https://life.itu.int/radioclub/rr/art05.htm). The basis for the structure of the VHF maritime mobile bands is the ITU-R Appendix 18 – Table of transmitting frequencies in the VHF maritime mobile band.

The ACMA gives effect to the requirements of the ITU Radio Regulations through domestic licensing and planning instruments, including the Australian Radiofrequency Spectrum Plan (the Spectrum Plan), apparatus licence condition determinations and the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence.

The Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence authorises the use of maritime ship stations on-board Australian ships to communicate with other stations. The operation of stations under the instrument must be in accordance with licence conditions, such as using the specified frequencies, transmitter output power and protocols set out in the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence.

*World Radiocommunication Conference 2019*

Australia is a signatory to the Constitution and Convention of the ITU. The ITU Radio Regulations are revised by ITU World Radiocommunication Conferences (WRCs), normally held every four years. At the conclusion of WRC-19, Australia signed the Final Acts of the conference, which made revisions to the 2015 ITU Radio Regulations, a treaty-level document. Following consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, Australia ratified the treaty on 28 March 2022.

The ACMA updates the Spectrum Plan following each WRC. In 2020, the ACMA remade the Spectrum Plan to reflect changes to the ITU’s Radio Regulations made at the WRC in 2019 (WRC-19). The Spectrum Plan reflects the positions agreed to by Australia on maritime radio issues discussed at WRC-19.

The ACMA VHF maritime mobile allocations and designated uses of those channels are broadly aligned with the ITU requirements as defined in Appendix 18 of the Radio Regulations, with some variations due to national planning requirements.

*The International Maritime Organization*

The International Maritime Organization (the IMO), of which Australia is a member state, is the United Nations agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. The IMO implements its responsibility for the safety of shipping through the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (the SOLAS Convention). The SOLAS Convention is an international maritime treaty that sets minimum safety standards in the construction, equipment and operation of merchant ships. Australia is a signatory to the SOLAS Convention.

Since the IMO adopted the worldwide system for communication of emergency information in 1988, and until recently, Inmarsat has been the only IMO-recognised provider of satellite communication services for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). In 2018, the IMO also recognised Iridium LLC (Iridium) as a provider of such services.

The Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence currently specifies Inmarsat rather than GMDSS more generally, or other recognised providers of satellite communications services for the GMDSS.

**Proposed amendments to instruments**

The ACMA is proposing amendments to the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence to give domestic effect to the WRC-19 agreed outcomes on maritime issues. The ACMA consulted the Australian Maritime Safety Agency (AMSA), the national regulatory body for maritime safety of navigation and search and rescue services, on the proposed amendments.

The proposed amendments to give effect to these changes are set out below.

*Facilitate the use of autonomous maritime radio devices (AMRDs)*

The ACMA is proposing amendments to the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence to facilitate the use of AMRDs. The proposed changes include designation of channels for AMRD Group A stations and AMRD Group B stations to protect the GMDSS and Automatic Identification System (AIS), in accordance with Resolution 362 (WRC-15).

*Enable a new VHF data exchange system (VDES) satellite component*

The ACMA is proposing amendments to the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence to authorise a new VDES satellite component, while ensuring that this component will not degrade the current terrestrial VDES components, Application Specific Messages (ASM) and AIS operations and not impose any additional constraints on existing services in these and adjacent frequency bands, in accordance with Resolution 360 (Rev.WRC‑15).

The proposed changes to the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence will update the existing VDES technical conditions for frequency bands, channels, purpose and limitations.

The proposed amendments also include other minor administrative changes to reflect the wording of the ITU Radio Regulations, and to clarify notes and table headings.

**Further information**

Copies of the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence, the draft Instrument, and the Consultation Paper explaining these proposed amendments in more detail are available on the ACMA’s website ([www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au)). Hard copies may be obtained from the ACMA by contacting:

The Manager

Spectrum Licensing Policy

Australian Communications and Media Authority

PO Box 13112

Law Courts

Melbourne VIC 8010

Telephone: (03) 9963 6785

Email: [SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au](mailto:SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au)

**Comments**

Under section 136 of the Act, the ACMA is inviting representations about the proposal to make the draft Instrument, varying the Maritime 27 MHz and VHF Class Licence.

Interested persons are invited to make representations about the proposed variation no later than 3 November 2023. Representations should be in writing and should be addressed to:

The Manager

Spectrum Licensing Policy Section

Australian Communications and Media Authority

PO Box 13112

Law Courts

Melbourne VIC 8010

or by email to:

[SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au](mailto:SLPSConsultations@acma.gov.au)