

WIRELESS INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA



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Call to Action:

When the foundation licence was made available in the mid 2000's a decision was taken at the time to create a "4 letter" callsign that would distinctly identify foundation users.

This callsign - colloquially known as a "F" call has remained in existence from this time.

Recent changes to the Licence Conditions Determination (LCD) have permitted operators with foundation licences to operate digital modes.

One of the challenges that has been created is that a number of the digital modes require, by design, a callsign that does not exceed 6 characters. The current "F" call has 7.

This has resulted in a situation whereby foundation licensees are unable to fully leverage the new licence conditions in the manner that was intended by the updates to the LCD.

The WIA predicted this challenge in our joint response to the ACMA LCD consultation process in August 2019.

During the process of developing the joint submission to the ACMA a number of key issues were considered prior to making the recommendations that were made in this submission.

- The purpose of callsigns
- The demonstrated negative social impact associated with the existing F call arrangement e.g. Callsign discrimination
- Changes in technology over the past 15 years
- The social benefit of various options presented

Selection Criteria:

It is the view of the Wireless Institute of Australia that any callsign changes should:

- Permit the use of all digital modes by foundation users
- Conform to the international Amateur Radio Service 6 character callsign format
- Encourage inclusive behaviour within Amateur Radio.
- Be aligned with the WIA's "*call sign for life*" vision
- Permit simple implementation without significant cost or new administrative processes
- Present no material impact to other operators' quiet enjoyment of the amateur service.
- Scale to support amateurs into the future

This document describes the options that have been presented for resolving this matter and the issues associated with each option contemplated in these terms.

WIA Recommendation:

Having reviewed the available options, there is only one proposed option that achieves a positive outcome across all the above selection criteria. This is Option 1, as described in detail below.

Why: The WIA is of the view that the best balance of objectives is achieved through the removal of all "class" based callsign allocations (prefixes) for both foundation and other callsigns.

Note 1: The historical reasons for the use of prefixes (Z, Y, F etc) no longer exist. The information that is embedded in the callsign in terms of licence class is readily available through public databases.

Note 2: Option 1 does not imply that a current foundation licence holder needs to change their current callsign - it is entirely at the discretion of the individual to retain their existing 7 character F call or not.

Available solutions:

Option 1: Removal of all “licence class” based callsign allocation.

This option seeks to alter the callsign allocation model such that any amateur, with any licence class, is able to obtain any 3 letter call sign. The WIA suggests that this option is, by far, the best long term approach.

✓	Solves the Foundation digital modes issue	This solution does resolve the matter of permitting foundation licence holders to use digital modes.
✓	Encourage inclusive behaviour within Amateur Radio	The removal of vectors that permit discrimination between foundation callsign users, and other users permanently, and positively encourages inclusive behaviour.
✓	Be aligned with the WIA's future “call sign for life” vision	This model allows a single callsign to be allocated to an operator. This need not be changed when an operator graduates from one class of licence to the next.
✓	Permit simple implementation without significant cost	There is virtually no implementation cost other than to update the business rules that govern the use of available callsigns. It simplifies the callsign allocation process by removing special cases. There MAY be a cost for a new callsign allocation imposed by AMC for the provision of their services on a user by user basis.
✓	Present no material impact to other operators' quiet enjoyment of the amateur service.	Information on the operator class remains publically available in the RRL if required.
✓	Scale to support amateurs into the future.	The limitations on callsign space are the same as the limitations that exist today and as such there are no material negative consequences to adoption of this approach.

Option 2: Allocation of several existing call sign letter blocks (eg: VKxQAA-VKxQZZ)

This option seeks to alter the callsign allocation model such foundation operators are allocated one or more blocks of existing call sign space. Foundation operators are then able to apply for a callsign that exists within these blocks.

✓	Solves the Foundation digital modes issue	This solution does resolve the matter of permitting foundation licence holders to use digital modes.
✗	Encourage inclusive behaviour within Amateur Radio	Creating a framework whereby foundations operators can be clearly identified has been demonstrated to create an environment of elitism where foundation operators (or indeed any operator that is not “advanced) is subject to victimisation and bullying.
✗	Be aligned with the WIA’s future “call sign for life” vision	This model offends the “callsign for life” vision as operators would need to alter their callsign as they advance through the qualifications..
✓	Permit simple implementation without significant cost	There is virtually no implementation cost other than to update the business rules that govern the use of available callsigns. There MAY be a cost for a new callsign allocation imposed by AMC for the provision of their services on a user by user basis.
✓	Present no material impact to other operators’ quiet enjoyment of the amateur service.	Information on the operator class remains publically available in the RRL if required. Other impacts to other users locally or internationally are considered to be insignificant.
✗	Scale to support amateurs into the future.	This is a workaround. Each single letter prefix only permits 676 callsigns to be allocated in each state. Based on current callsign usage multiple blocks would need to be allocated to service the peak demand in some states. Ongoing growth of the amateur service may result in a situation in the future where there is no longer any free space that can be allocated to foundation licence holders without asking other operators to change callsigns.

Option 3: Alteration of Foundation call signs to use an alternate prefix (eg: VJ???? Instead of VK????)

This option seeks to create an entirely new prefix group to capture foundation operators. This prefix group could be any of the unused prefixes allocated to Australia by the IRU. (AX, VZ and VH-VN).

✓	Solves the Foundation digital modes issue	This solution does resolve the matter of permitting foundation licence holders to use digital modes.
✗	<i>Encourage inclusive behaviour within Amateur Radio</i>	Creating a framework whereby foundations operators can be clearly identified has been demonstrated to create an environment of elitism where foundation operators (or indeed any operator that is not “advanced”) is subject to victimisation and bullying.
✗	Be aligned with the WIA’s future “call sign for life” vision	This model offends the “callsign for life” vision as operators would need to alter their callsign as they advance through the qualifications..
✓	Permit simple implementation without significant cost	There are costs (in the form of time) associated with implementing this that extend beyond updating of the business rules that govern the use of available callsigns. The time consumed would, in the view of the WIA, be better invested making other progress on the LCD. There <i>MAY</i> be a cost for a new callsign allocation imposed by AMC for the provision of their services on a user by user basis.
✗	Present no material impact to other operators’ quiet enjoyment of the amateur service.	The creation of another prefix for use in Australia is likely to create material confusion for Australian and international operators alike. It would also preclude use of the special use AX prefix due to potential duplicate callsigns.
✓	Scale to support amateurs into the future.	The limitations on callsign space are the same as the limitations that exist today and as such there are no material negative consequences to adoption of this approach

Option 4: Continuation of the existing arrangement (eg VKxF?????)

This “staus quo” option preserves the existing callsign arrangements for foundation licence holders. The WIA does not believe this is a viable option.

✗	Solves the Foundation digital modes issue	This solution does not solve the underlying issue caused by the changes to the LCD
✗	Encourage inclusive behaviour within Amateur Radio	Creating a framework whereby foundations operators can be clearly identified has been demonstrated to create an environment of elitism where foundation operators (or indeed any operator that is not “advanced) is subject to victimisation and bullying.
✗	Be aligned with the WIA’s future “call sign for life” vision	This model offends the “callsign for life” vision as operators would need to alter their callsign as they advance through the qualifications..
✓	Permit simple implementation without significant cost	There are no costs.
✓	Present no material impact to other operators’ quiet enjoyment of the amateur service.	There are no changes and therefore no impact
✓	Scale to support amateurs into the future.	The limitations on callsign space are the same as the limitations that exist today and as such there are no material negative consequences to adoption of this approach

Authorised by the Wireless Institute of Australia,
January 2020