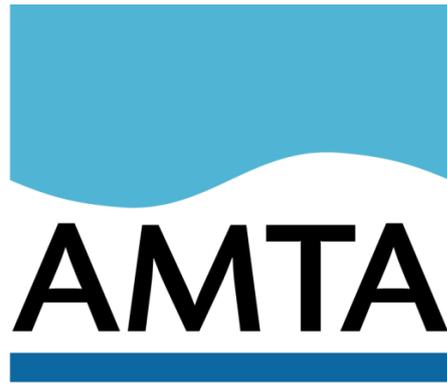


## AMTA submission to the ACMA

Area Wide Licences

IFC 19/2018

9 August 2019



**Australian Mobile  
Telecommunications  
Association**

### Introduction

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Australian Communications and Media Authority's consultation paper on the proposed area-wide apparatus licence type (AWL).

AMTA broadly supports the ACMA's objective to create a new transmitter and receiver licence type that can provide improved flexibility and more efficiently support the deployment of 5G applications including some IoT and other anticipated uses of spectrum across small areas involving multi-device deployments. While this is a sound objective, we do believe that greater consideration needs to be given to some of the practical implications around implementation of the AWL as currently proposed. Further consultation with stakeholders is strongly advised before this proposal is considered by the Authority.

### Comments on the AWL concept

#### Registration should be the default

AMTA does not agree with the proposed approach which would assume a default position that registration for devices would not be needed for AWLs. We strongly prefer a more conservative approach that would assume that registration is needed unless it can be demonstrated that it would be unnecessary or unduly burdensome for any particular use type or licensee. Such an approach would better protect the rights of licence holders and ensure that we retain a robust and usable framework for the management of interference issues. It is also consistent with the current approach for apparatus licences as well as the expectations of users. As we are designing AWLs with new, unproven and often not yet envisaged spectrum uses in mind, a more cautious approach would seem to be prudent if we are to avoid the risk of interference to other licence holders and mobile communications networks. Avoiding or minimising the risk of interference is always preferable to having to resolve issues after deployment of a technology, equipment and devices. We therefore prefer a default position where registration is required for AWLs unless a technical planning assessment shows that it is not needed.

## **Geographic boundaries**

AMTA understands the desirability of a scalable licence that can be adapted to various uses, however, we caution that defined usage areas need to be reasonable and sensible. We would want to avoid defining arbitrary boundaries, for example, that slice a regional town in half, or areas that are too small, for example anything less than 1km<sup>2</sup>. While small areas such as 500m by 500m could be useful for an underlying grid, we suggest that there should be a defined minimum area for any one AWL that is substantially larger than that, and preferably no smaller than the current HCIS level one which is approximately 9km<sup>2</sup>.

## **Interference management**

A strong and robust framework to manage and resolve any issues of interference is fundamental to the licensing framework. The AWL needs to be designed so that interference does not become an unacceptable risk to other users and licence holders of spectrum. The management of interference should not simply be conflated with the defining of boundaries for AWLs but must encompass an approach that ensures the risk of interference is properly assessed, understood and managed prior to issue of the AWL and deployment. This requires a thorough technical planning and assessment process for AWL.

## **One Round of Consultation is Not Sufficient**

AMTA considers that due to the relatively sparse detail provided by the ACMA in this paper, it would be prudent to engage in a second round of industry consultation for this matter. This should be based on a modified and more detailed consultation paper that addresses and further expands on the issues raised by submissions that ACMA receives to this paper.

## **Technical and other matters to consider in deciding to use AWL licensing in any particular band**

Noting that it is difficult to answer this question without understanding exactly how AWL would be constructed; AMTA suggests that the following matters should be considered before deciding that use of an AWL would be appropriate:

- Can the risk of interference be reasonably managed and compliance enforced?
- How does the proposed area align with existing boundaries for issued licences?
- Is there any reason not to require registration of devices i.e. would it be unduly burdensome or is the risk of interference so low that it would not be necessary?
- Is there a simpler way for device registration to be done that is not overly time consuming and/or costly?
- Are there known or expected deployment and use cases that preclude the use of another licence type?
- Will the use of an area wide licence materially impact an adjacent (in frequency or geography) spectrum licensees' ability to operate?

## Potential impact on current and intended network deployments

We believe AWL and the flexibility it will provide could be beneficial to our members and encourage the ACMA to proceed with the AWL concept. However, as mentioned previously, we recommend that the ACMA re-examine the decisions on technical requirements and constraints, boundary creation and management principles, registration and protection priorities and existing licensee interworking in order to ensure that this licensing framework is fit for purpose.

## Bands and geographic areas

It is foreseen that higher frequency bands or bands with entirely different deployment and use cases in disparate geographies would likely be most suited to AWLs. However, more detail as discussed above is needed before a more detailed response can be given.

For any further questions relating to this submission please contact Lisa Brown, Public Policy Manager, AMTA at [lisa.brown@amta.org.au](mailto:lisa.brown@amta.org.au) or 02 8920 3555.