

The New Zealand Amateur Radio Licence and Callsign Issues

At the NZART Nelson Conference in 2002, Katherine Moody of MED RSM announced to the meeting that MED were to issue a free life-time licence to New Zealand amateur radio operators.

Previous to the Nelson conference, our NZART ALO had been in constant contact with MED RSM regarding a possible free life-time licence for radio amateurs but this sudden announcement still came as a surprise. Another surprise came later. It was the expectation of MED RSM that all amateur radio beacons, repeaters and fixed links, previously free, would now attract a licence fee of \$250.00 each. With over 300 such installations the total fee was out of the question, how would this sum be raised?

Over many months of negotiation with MED RSM, our ALO in consultation with FMTAG and Council, managed to gain a reduction in the proposed fee for each beacon, repeater and fixed link to \$50.00 each, with a proviso that MED issue one invoice to one address for one payment, thereby reducing the invoicing costs to MED. This was considered to be a more manageable fee.

The proposed life-time amateur licence for operators: "General User Radio Licence" (GURL), was to come into being on July 1st this year and the beacon, repeater and fixed link fee would first come due in May 2006.

The problem Council was faced with is: how is this fee to be collected? There were many options, some were:

Add the sum to NZART subscriptions: not acceptable as non-members get another free ride.

Send out separate invoices to all amateurs: not economic, 4700 Amateurs billed for \$3.83 each, non-members have no compulsion to pay and still get a free ride. The invoicing cost is too high for such a small amount.

A donation scheme where all members would be encouraged to donate \$10 and non-members \$15 into a charitable trust: this scheme removes the invoicing cost and there could be tax advantages. Members are better off by \$25 and non-members by \$20, with no more annual MED invoices for \$35 to every amateur licensee.

A very astute businessman and Member of NZART offered to assist with preparing a business plan, negotiate and to provide support to NZART to enable NZART to have a similar scheme to other agencies that MED RSM deals with.

Negotiations are continuing with the MED and I hope to be able to announce something at or before Conference this year.

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