

# Review of the 2.5 GHz spectrum band

The ACMA has announced its approach to the future planning and use of the 2.5 GHz band.

The ACMA's review of the 2.5 GHz band has two key objectives:

- > to plan and allocate the 2.5 GHz band in such a way as to maximise the overall benefit derived from use of the spectrum
- > to provide long-term certainty to the current incumbents in the band—the free-to-air commercial broadcasters and the ABC.

The ACMA considers that the implementation of the new arrangements will achieve these objectives.

'The decision on a way forward for the 2.5 GHz band is the culmination of a number of consultation processes the ACMA has conducted over the last five years,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA. 'I am very pleased that we are now able to move into the implementation phase for the 2.5 GHz band review.'

Part of the frequency range 2500–2690 MHz (the 2.5 GHz band) will be re-planned so it can be used for such things as wireless access services (WAS), while part will be retained by the current licensees for electronic news gathering (ENG). In addition, a range of other bands will be made available for ENG services to ensure provision of service delivery equivalent to that currently provided.

The complexity of the issues to be resolved during the implementation phase—particularly the development of appropriate arrangements in bands other than the 2.5 GHz band—means that implementation is expected to take place over several years. Mr Chapman emphasised that the implementation phase will be characterised by ongoing consultation and he hoped affected stakeholders would continue to work with the ACMA.

'If affected parties work constructively with us then we will more readily be able to develop appropriate arrangements which balance competing needs,' he said.

This latest announcement follows consideration of submissions the ACMA received in response to its January 2010 discussion paper on the review of the 2.5 GHz band and coincides with the publication of a response to the submissions paper, which is available on the ACMA's website.

The January discussion paper revealed that the ACMA had reached the preliminary view that the current planning, licensing and pricing arrangements for the band may not support its future efficient allocation and use. The ACMA therefore sought views about a range of future options for the 2.5 GHz band, including options for the current incumbent users.

A number of important issues were raised in submissions to the January discussion paper. The ACMA recognised that the new arrangements in the 2.5 GHz band and the other bands would have an effect on a range of stakeholders and sectors of the Australian economy in addition to the current incumbents in the 2.5 GHz band.

'The ACMA considers that its approach balances the needs of these sectors,' said Mr Chapman.

At present, the 2.5 GHz band is used almost exclusively by free-to-air broadcasters for outside broadcasting, which includes ENG. Following identification of the band internationally for WAS in 2000, the broadcasters have faced ongoing uncertainty about which parts of the spectrum will be available to them in the longer term to meet their outside broadcasting requirements. This decision will provide certainty to the broadcasters and ensure the continued provision of important news services to Australians.

## Detail of the new arrangements

The re-planning of the 2.5 GHz band and the other bands will see the ACMA undertaking a range of processes to work towards the following outcomes:

- > re-allocation of the 2500–2570 MHz and 2620–2690 MHz bands for spectrum licenses, at least in major metropolitan areas, that are technology flexible but optimised for WAS
- > conversion of ENG apparatus licences to 15-year spectrum licences on an Australia-wide basis in 2570–2620 MHz ('the mid-band gap' of the 2.5 GHz band)
- > ENG access via apparatus licences to additional parts of the 2.5 GHz band in regional areas of known high use, as well as access on a shared basis with WAS in other areas dependent on demand for WAS
- > ENG access to the following 'alternative bands':
  - > shared use of the bands 2025–2110 MHz and 2200–2300 MHz
  - > exclusive use of the band 2010–2025 MHz, at least in capital city areas
- > ENG access to the 1980–2010 MHz and 2170–2200 MHz bands, with the caveat that mobile-satellite services may be introduced into these bands in the future, with the ACMA investigating the viability of long-term sharing between ENG and mobile-satellite services. 📶

For more information and to access a copy of the *Review of the 2.5 GHz band and long-term arrangements for ENG—Response to Submissions Paper*, visit the ACMA website at [www.acma.gov.au](http://www.acma.gov.au) (go to About ACMA: News & media centre > Media releases > ACMA media release 132/2010 – 21 October).