

Spectrum management in the radio licensing regime

The Ministry of Economic Development has released the findings from a review of Spectrum Management in the Radio Licensing Regime. No major changes to the regime are proposed as a result of the review.

The regime has not been subject to comprehensive review since the Radiocommunications Act 1989 came into effect. However, various aspects of the regime had been examined as part of the review leading up to the 2000 amendment of the Radiocommunications Act, and in the 2005 Review of Radio Spectrum Policy.

It is important to ensure that spectrum management continues to meet the changing needs of private and public users in order to maximise the value of spectrum to New Zealand society. Radio spectrum managed under the radio licensing regime is a significant resource for New Zealand's ICT infrastructure and supports a wide range of public and private uses including land mobile, public safety, emergency and defence services, and fixed link services supporting high speed data networks for mobile phones and broadband internet.

The discussion document was intended to gather more information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the current regime and to test the Ministry's current thinking with industry. The work on potential improvement options contained in the document was at a very early stage of policy development. The Ministry has taken into account the submissions in recommending further work.

Evidence from the earlier discussion document and technical report, Ministry experience, and submissions from stakeholders suggest that the regime as a whole is working well, with a few exceptions (such as studio-to-transmitter link spectrum in major centres where supply may not be currently meeting demand).

The discussion document canvassed a range of potential options which could improve the regime in the future, should problems arise, with a view to seeking comment on the merits of these options. Stakeholders largely endorsed the way the Ministry approaches issues, such as congestion, when they arise. Some limited interest was shown by submitters in potential options that may further improve the licensing regime. The [full submissions](#) have been published on the Radio Spectrum Management website.

Based on the review findings, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology, Hon Steven Joyce, has agreed that the Ministry continue the Radio Licensing Regime in its current form and consider congestion problems on a case-by-case basis. The Ministry also intends to explore options for minor improvements to the regime, including:

1. Conducting ongoing reviews of demand trends through regular surveys of spectrum usage (in order to address bottlenecks before they occur), coupled with a more systematic and forward-looking approach to enabling new technologies as they emerge;
2. Consideration of regional management rights and geographical overlay and underlay services (where an easement is created on an existing management right to allow another user to operate in areas where the right-holder has no equipment installed) in the next review of the Radiocommunications Act – likely to commence in 2010/11;
3. Developing and promoting a process for facilitating requests by prospective radio users to free up unused spectrum by cancelling or transferring radio licences; and
4. Working with a university to investigate estimating the value of particular spectrum bands with a view to benchmarking economic efficiency.

[Summary of submissions and conclusions](#)

This report summarises the Ministry's current view of the effectiveness of the current Radio Licensing Regime (RLR) to meet the changing needs of private and public users in order to maximise the value of spectrum to New Zealand society.

[Submissions](#)

The Ministry received 17 submissions in response to its discussion document on Spectrum Management in the Radio Licensing Regime.

[Competition issues presentation - 21 April 2009](#)

[Technical report and presentation - A study of the utilization of radio licences](#)

A study of the utilization of radio licences.

[Discussion document](#)

The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) has reviewed the way spectrum is managed under the Radio Licensing Regime. This discussion paper was the first step in the review process.