

Latest news

ACMA media release

19 November 2015

Spectrum reform of the 803–960 MHz band

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has released its decision paper, [The ACMA's long-term strategy for the 803–960 MHz band](#), which finalises its review of the 803–960 MHz band. The paper details a range of reforms to the band, as well as a detailed timetable out to 2024 for its implementation.

‘The 803–960 MHz band has for a long time been at the forefront of mobile communications in Australia,’ said ACMA Chairman, Chris Chapman. ‘It carried the first cellular mobile phone services to the community more than 20 years ago, and with a mix of legacy GSM and modern 4G mobile technologies, continues to form a core component of our enviable national mobile broadband environment.’ See Figure 1 below.

A key impact of the reforms will be the progressive clearance of some services over the next decade to allow for allocation of the 850 MHz ‘expansion’ band for mobile broadband services (refer to Figure 1). The new allocation will also ultimately make use of a vacant piece of former analog television spectrum (803–820 MHz) that was unable to be utilised as part of the 700 MHz ‘digital dividend’. Decisions on the timing and method of allocation of the 850 MHz expansion band are yet to be made.

Apart from the major mobile broadband service providers, there is an established community of users in this band providing trunked land mobile services, fixed links, sound outside broadcast and studio-to-transmitter links. There are also myriad consumer devices that operate under the Low Interference Potential Devices (LIPD) class licence in the 915–928 MHz band. The reforms to this band will have implications for some of those services, whilst also making available additional spectrum under the LIPD (928–935 MHz).

‘Industry has been reminding us that it wants certainty about arrangements in this band and the ACMA has considered the long-term impact on incumbents affected by these decisions,’ Mr Chapman said.

‘To make the transition easier, we’re putting in place a careful plan with timelines somewhat longer than we had previously foreshadowed. This will ease the impact on users needing to undertake equipment modifications or buy replacements to comply with the new arrangements.’

The first steps in reforming the band have already taken place, with the ACMA replacing the channelling arrangement in the 900 MHz Band Plan by two Radiocommunications and Licensing Instructions: RALI MS 40 and RALI MS 41.

Reconfiguration of the 900 MHz GSM band, as well as a related proposal to implement a 1 MHz downshift of the 850 MHz band (to maximise the utility of the adjacent 900 MHz GSM band), remain critical objectives for the ACMA to deliver.

‘Further reform of the 900 MHz GSM band to optimise it for mobile broadband services will continue to be a key work item for the ACMA and will be pursued separately from the broader

implementation plan set out in this paper,' Mr Chapman added.

'In a sense, we're fortunate these issues are largely 'self-contained' to the existing three licensees (Telstra, Optus and VHA). This makes it possible for the ACMA to deal with these issues in isolation to the implementation of those broader reforms to the 803–960 MHz band detailed in the paper. We'll be consulting directly with the relevant industry stakeholders to bring about the desired changes to the 900 MHz GSM band.'

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact: Emma Rossi, Media Manager, (02) 9334 7719 and 0434 652 063 or media@acma.gov.au.

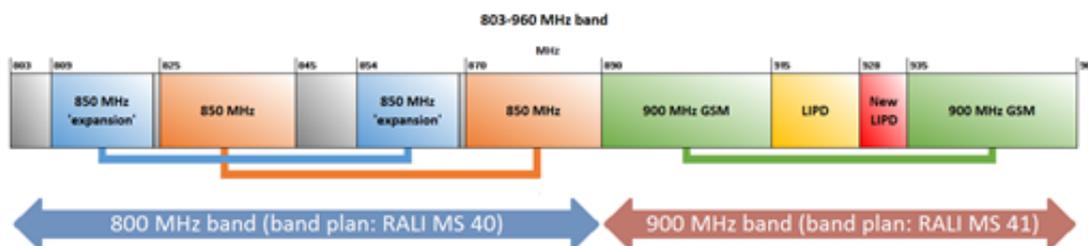
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Backgrounder

The review of the 803–960 MHz band, which began in 2011, is the first major revision of arrangements in this important piece of spectrum since 1992. The release of the reforms has taken longer than was originally anticipated.

The ACMA will be holding a series of targeted spectrum tune-ups in early 2016 to provide stakeholders with further details on the new arrangements and how they will be rolled-out. Dates and additional information will be finalised over coming months.

Figure 1: 803–960 MHz band



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