

New Format

CRARC Communications

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Image : Isaacs Ridge Repeater Site



**CANBERRA REGION
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB**

Newsletter Changes

First of all, thank you for the comments on the first edition of CRARC Communications. Secondly apologies on this one being well overdue.

After the last newsletter it was decided to change and use an open-source desktop publishing program, and with that came the necessity to create a new template for the newsletter which took a little time to do it properly.

One of the other reasons is that Microsoft in all its wisdom has decided to sunset Microsoft Publisher in 2026, so it was decided to make the jump now instead of devoting any more time to the product.

One of my rules when choosing software nowadays is :

- 1) Functionality - will it perform the task
- 2) Does it work on Windows and Linux version

This way, I am not tied to company that decides what operating system I run, what software I run, and have pay an every increasing amount for the privilege.

With Linux continuing to mature (and by that, I mean becoming a more user friendly operating system), and many software developers are producing their applications for Linux, after removing their products reliance on Windows libraries & classes, Microsoft are forcing users to really consider their alternatives, probably more so than any time in Microsoft's history.

Anyhow, on the positive side, it will allow a more varied format, possibly allowing for adding longer articles and a more templated approach, making it quicker to add new articles, and another positive is that it runs on Linux, Mac and Windows.

Writing this after almost completing this newsletter, I will say that there was a real positive to the demise of Microsoft Publisher, and that was finding Scribus - <https://www.scribus.net> . This program was an absolute delight to use and did everything I asked of it and more. With a few hours, I was working on content and design and not spending hours learning how to work it. Scribus has been around for 24 years, and even if I had a question, I quickly found the answer on the net, usually by asking a plain English question. I also found how restrictive and inhibiting Publisher is to the design and content phases.

Sorry for the ramble, but is well worth knowing, there are other choices out there, and after the presentation a few meetings ago, there have been a number of members who have taken the plunge to applying themselves to learning Linux.

Southfest coming!

Tuggeranong's Community festival is happening again this year on Saturday 15th November 2025.

It is a perfect opportunity for Club / Amateur Radio promotion, and discussing the hobby with the community, explaining what it is all about, engaging with people that have a piqued interest in Amateur Radio, catching up with current members, and also Amateurs that may not have been involved with the club for a while. We even have had a few foundation candidates that learnt about the course after seeing the stand at Southfest.

We generally run a few rigs and makeshift antenna's and enjoy a few on-air QSO's with other amateurs during the day.

However, we are looking for your involvement and assistance. Even if you can spare a few hours, or the day, we are very open to your involvement, even if you are a new member, it's a great way to get to know your club and other members..

If you can assist, please send an email to the committee@crarc.org.au



Southfest stand 2024



Mt Ginini Roof blown off

Late on the 17th of September 2025, the Committee was notified by Air Services Australia, that on one of their recent visits, they noted our Mt Ginini repeater shed roof had been dislodged and were kind enough to send some photos of the damage. The committee thanks Air Services Australia for their prompt notification and value their good communications as our Landlord.

Whilst we enjoy the benefit of having one of the highest repeaters in Australia, it also comes with its downside, which is being susceptible to high winds, storms, snow and accessibility being dependent on the season.

After an initial check that the Mt Ginini repeaters were still operational, the committee hastily arranged a group to head up there. Whilst it was generally known that the repeater had a sub ceiling structure that protected the equipment from the elements, you don't leave things to chance or further rain/storms.

The Committee, quickly organised a crew to head up there on the Friday morning, after obtaining supplies and equipment to facilitate the repairs. Rod (VK1CBR), Matt (VK1MA), Steve (VK2NSS) and Graeme (VK1IO) spent a lovely day on top of Mt. Ginini, panel beating, silconing and screwing the roof back on and servicing the locks, along with a quick inspection of the site and thankfully no damage to the repeater equipment. With this work completed, the roof will hopefully not need any further work for a couple of years.

This serves as a good example of our need for self-insurance and the clubs continued requirement for Public Liability Insurance.

Bulls Head Lease Renewed

The Telecommunications Site at Bulls Head, known to us as the Bulls Head repeater site and tower, is in the process (or has completed) of being transferred from ActewAGL to Icon Water.

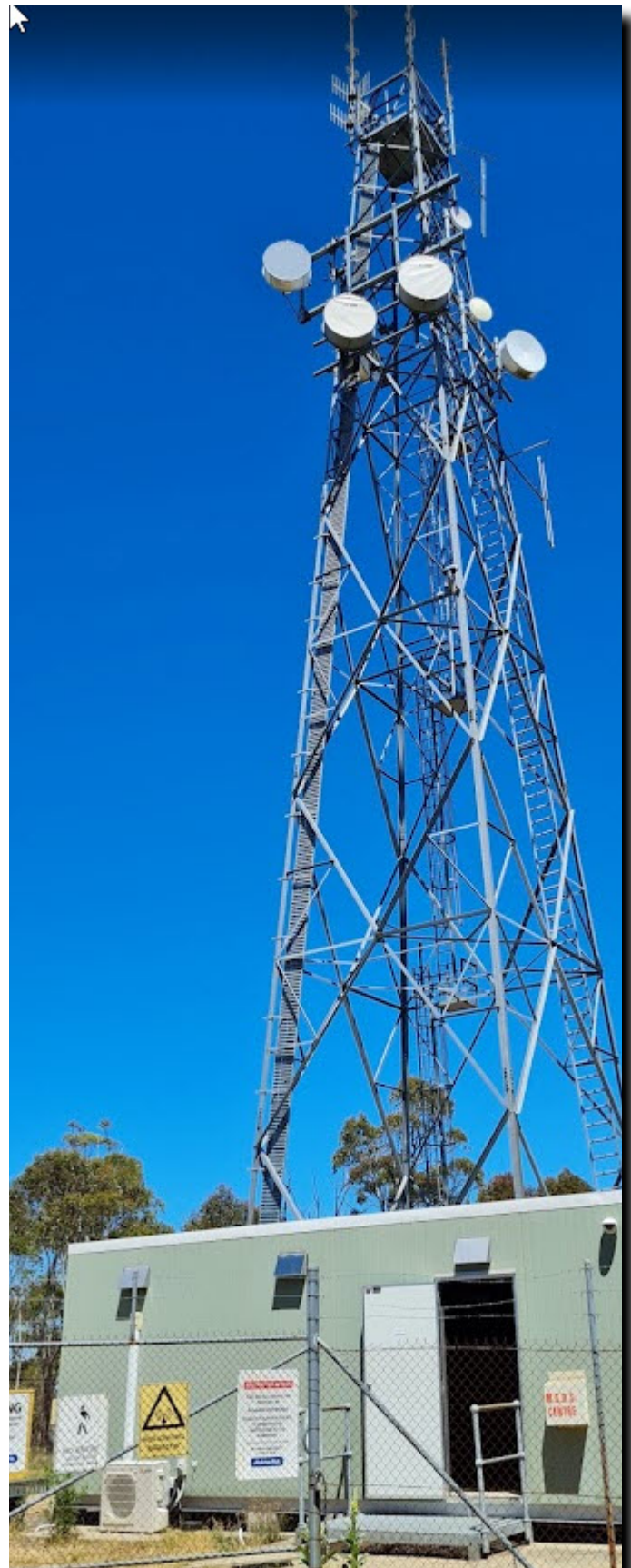
This required a new sub licensing agreement with Icon, and regretfully the loss of a very favourable cost arrangement previously held with ActewAGL. It should be stated however, that Icon Water at least recognised the club's not-for-profit status and provided leasing costs that at least could be considered by the club.

One of the benefits for the club of the Bulls Head repeater site is that it is fully managed, which includes power, air conditioning and security, which is hard to find especially in prime locations. This also weighed in as a prime consideration.

After many, many emails between committee members and also to Icon, several discussions at the committee meetings, looking at what other options were available, including weighing up the time to decommission the site and remove the CRARC equipment (if we decided not to proceed), it was finally decided to continue with the Bulls Head Repeater site as it does provide a good alternate repeater site.

The committee has also decided to undertake some further consideration of how to make more use of Bulls Head, so that we can obtain the best value out of this increased lease cost for the members.

Coming : For those that have been involved or following along with AllStar discussions, we are looking to connect an Allstar node to Bulls Head very shortly for testing and hopefully if testing goes well, provide member access after developing some standard operating practices. Just one of the items being considered.



CW a renewed interest

Let's do a correction first. CW is a mode (Continuous Wave) and Morse Code is an encoding method. However, in Amateur Radio, these terms are used interchangeably. Also, it should be realised that Morse Code does not necessarily utilise a carrier wave e.g. morse code can be sent with light & sound and possibly other methods.

This whole article could spell out the arguments, and clarifications of the terms, but that is not what it is about. I will use the term CW as it is quicker to type.

Let's get back to what this article is about and that is the resurgence and interest in CW, particularly in the 2020's onward (although it is fair to say the resurgence started many years earlier). This can also be seen with the well known, Long Island CW Club starting up in 2018, due to the growing demand in learning and practicing CW.

It would be fair to say I would have had my Amateur Licence back in 1986 if there was no CW requirement, as I passed the NAOCP (Novice Licence) Theory and Regs, but failed miserably on the CW exam of only 5 words per Minute (WPM) back then. Now I look back and can see a prime reason for my failure, was that the reduction from 10 WPM to 5WPM was actually a disadvantage, as many (not all), learnt by counting (or over thinking or analysing the code), as you had the time between the characters. At the higher speed of 10WPM, you learn the patterns, which is essential for increasing your receive speed.

Well over a quarter of a century later, I finally got my Amateur qualification, after finding out that they had removed the CW component, but actually now I want that skill in my arsenal, to the point it is now one of my goals to master it within the next year, and actively use it. Reading on the internet, I am definitely one of growing group that has this interest.

Why is the interest increasing ?

- With the Sunspot cycle starting it's decline (up for debate) - meaning less favourable RF conditions, CW is one of those modes that can "punch" through and requires less power (e.g. QRP and less)
- It's no longer a mandatory requirement (e.g. I no longer "have" to learn it, but "want" to learn it)
- It actively utilises your brain, which for some is a good thing as you get older.
- You can take advantage of simpler, lower cost transmitters and receivers, some you can build yourself. For less than \$100AUD, you can build yourself a Transceiver and Antenna and be on the air.
- Like Polaroid Cameras, and Vinyl records, there is resurgence in the older technologies looking at pastime alternatives to a completely online world such as Social media.
- An increase in the use of Morse code, in games and films, and car manufacturers incorporating CW/ Morse Code in their Car designs as a way to reach and engage a wider audience.
- CW is a great alternative to using another popular low power mode called FT8. CW stimulates the brain cells a little more and probably more social as well :-)

For those of you that are interested :

Graeme (VK1IO) is looking to start up some informal CW nights on Tech nights for those that have a keen interest (the club has two CW Sets), so if you have your own key/sounder, bring it along and join in.

The Foundation Cliff

One of the issues heard, time and time again, from foundation candidates is that there is quite a lot of interest shown in assisting a prospective foundation candidates, including taking the exam. However, as soon as the exam is over, it all goes quiet. If a Foundation holder had a friend that may have introduced and guided them into Amateur Radio, they might be given some further guidance and encouragement, but for the vast majority of others, they are simply on their own.

Yes, it is clearly apparent to the more experienced members, that you get off your backside, come along to Club presentations, get along to Club events and start involving yourself. Again, those that have someone to guide them, they will be given some hand-holding, direction and encouragement. But now we turn to the person that doesn't know anyone, took the plunge and got themselves enrolled, passed their Foundation exam, and don't know what the next step is, as there is no guide. Up until now there was a website or emails that told them exactly what to do, what date their exam was on, and generally what will happen when they pass.

We need to remember, that this hobby is all inclusive, and that it also attracts people who may not be overly social, talkative or even confident in themselves (especially if they are young). Even reaching out via email may not be something they are confident with, or be effective in communicating their needs.

This can have a negative effect, or at least limit the progress of a new Foundation holder, and if it continues, your Foundation holder, a few years later doesn't feel they got what they needed or wanted from the hobby and doesn't renew their membership and ultimately their qualification. What we are describing here is the "Foundation cliff". You are not going to keep every Foundation holder that comes online, but you need to provide that guiding hand and encouragement, so that they can develop and become involved.

With the introduction of the Foundation licence (now Qualification) in October 2005, the ongoing structuring and refinement of STEM program's in Australian schools (2007 onwards) along with the growth in interest in Single Board Computers and Microcontrollers has contributed to a renewed interest in Electronics and its related fields. Combined with this, in the last few years, has been an uptake in solitary hobbies due to Covid-19, which has also contributed to the improved (or at least stabilised) Amateur Radio numbers in Australia. However, the Amateur Radio community (organisations, clubs, and members) need to make the changes to capture this renewed interest and start growing this number, especially with the ageing population, which is closely aligned with the Amateur radio demographic.

What can you do as a club member?

In simple terms, a lot -

- If you attend a meeting and you see someone you have not seen before, introduce yourself, and get to know them.
- Ask them how long they have been involved in Amateur Radio
- Ask them their interests in Amateur Radio (you might find that they align with yours)
- Ask them what equipment they use
- If they are new to Amateur Radio, ask them if they have any areas that they have questions or want to know more. If you can't help them redirect them to others that can.
- If you have a name badge, wear it, or design one. Some of us have great memories for names and faces, whilst others do not.

The Foundation Cliff (cont)

So what can the club in association with its members do?

- Foundation Member Retention Strategies – Survey foundation members – what do they want from their club?
- Further Education – Provide them direction and strategies for their next goal – Standard or Advanced Licence. Where can they do their exams?
- Foundation Member only meetings (e.g. another night separate to the main meeting). This is a great idea with talks and discussions aimed purely at the Foundation member. With Amateur radio being all inclusive, it does not mean Standard & Advanced cannot turn up, but they do so on the premise that they are there to assist. It might be presentations on “Now you have your licence – what else can I do” or “What radio’s can I buy – what’s best, what the lowest cost, what will do what I need”. This is a perfect use of a Club’s Premises, especially those with nights not being utilised.
- Encouraging members to experiment and understand – remember they are not all RF engineers.
- Bring them into the fold – introduce them at meetings – Let the members know who they are.
- Presentations – aim some presentations purely at Foundation members with a few knowledgeable members presenting. Explain what contesting is and how SOTA, POTA and WWFF work. With some of the Foundation members being younger, this type of presentation may be interesting to them.
- Technical Direction – Discuss equipment, what the issues are with low cost radios, demonstrate the issues with low cost radios and what low cost radios are passable for a foundation member to get involved with.
- Your club website should to have a section that is dedicated just to them. Provide them with details of “channels” to talk to other foundation members, how they can become involved, and this may include mail-list channels, Discord Servers if you have one (maybe have a section called foundation, so they know they can ask questions in there (others can see it as well – but it’s their area). Discuss other non club related resources
- Explain what the technical nights are, what the Club presentation nights are and what is expected at either and why it will benefit them
- Start Foundation Coffee meets every few weekends. It’s amazing how much information gets passed over a relaxing coffee.

So what is the club looking to do right now?

We are still working through some ideas, but there is the prospect of possibly running a Foundation or new member meeting on the 1st Wednesday of each month which is available to us (On that Wednesday we generally do not have a set meeting).

Whether we do it every month, or every three months or even every two months or not at all will be based on survey results (coming shortly) which will be sent out to all members (that are subscribed to CRARC News. So, whether you are currently Foundation qualified, a Standard or even an Advanced, and feel this type of night will be useful to you, please complete the survey.

If there is enough interest, we will look to trial it for 6 months, and make a decision to continue it after that. This will be the perfect environment to ask questions you are unsure of asking, and we will look to make sure we have many of the presenters that were at your Foundation training, as well as other Amateurs interested in helping, but its focus will be enabling our new Amateurs to enjoy the hobby.

Presentation Volunteers

We try and keep this newsletter up-beat but we are in real need of some presentations (yes, this old chestnut again!).

We have had plenty of suggestions of what the club/committee should be doing and even the presentations that we should get, but we need club members to step up and present

We know you are out there, and many of you have some real experience, or at least a subject matter expert on particular facets of Amateur Radio, or even a little experience on a popular subject.

Many on the committee have stepped up to do Presentations at the last minute which is admirable, but you need to remember the committee already puts in quite an effort into the club in time and resources.

Whilst some of these items make it hard to involve non-committee members, there is one area, that will take a huge load off committee members and that is to step up to do presentations, particularly for General meetings.

Just look at the subjects you have conquered or have strong grasp on. Even if you are not sure it is presentation worthy, then let us know, we can work with you to round out what you can offer, provide suggestions of what equipment the club can offer for the presentation, and we will try our best to make your presentation a success. If you have an idea and believe it will make a good presentation please contact the committee@crarc.org.au

Brookvale WICEN Volunteers

The Brookvale Horse Endurance ride – the first (and pretty much only) WICEN supported event for Spring 2024 is approaching us. The event takes place on the trails in the Uriarra /Sherwood forest areas on Sunday 19 October with horses and their riders covering distances of up to 80km. This year's event is expected to be the same as last year's event with both legs in the Uriarra /Sherwood forest areas

We need to provide operators for 5 check points and the headquarters – some checkpoints may need to have divided shifts and the HQ will definitely need multiple shifts, so anticipate needing at least 10-12 operators, although more is better!

This event normally has some relatively early starts (historically around 5am for the early checkpoints), so an event well suited for the early birds. The checkpoints are off forestry tracks, so in most case relatively easily accessed by 2WD vehicles with a bit of clearance, but as always if they get really wet, they can end up being better suited to 4WD access, so please let us know what your vehicle situation is when advising availability.

If you can assist with this event, please respond using the web form at the below link. Replying to this email is nice, but I am going to ask you to fill out the form so that all organisers can see the responses. Of course if you do have questions about it, please feel free to ask us direct. <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdoTX6UobHzcDWchuf6EyY7yH2TMJZxQRsgU1TIAOBjAutOag/viewform?usp=dialog>

Contests - October 2025 - December 2025

Well this is a new section recommended by one of the committee members. We hope to provide a list of the popular contests coming up over the next three months. Whilst most of this content is available on the Web, this will serve as a reminder. How many times have you got through a weekend, maybe completed some gardening, only to realise that you forgot a contest that was on over the weekend?

Now we are going to make it very clear. This is provided for your convenience, and whilst checks were made where possible with the official site for accuracy, even some of these sites had conflicting information (as they often cut and paste from one year to the next), so do not rely solely on the dates and times listed below. If a contest interests you, check the dates, times and rules on the official sites.

Contest/Website	Date Start	Time Start	Date End	Time End	Modes
Mackrothen RTTY Contest More Info : https://www.pl259.org/makrothen/makrothen-rules/	Oct-11	00:00Z	Oct-11	08:00Z	RTTY
Oceania DX CW https://www.oceaniadxcontest.com/rules	Oct-11	06:00Z	Oct-12	06:00Z	CW
Mackrothen RTTY Contest More Info : https://www.pl259.org/makrothen/makrothen-rules/	Oct-11	16:00Z	Oct-11	24:00Z	RTTY
Mackrothen RTTY Contest More Info : https://www.pl259.org/makrothen/makrothen-rules/	Oct-12	08:00Z	Oct-12	16:00Z	RTTY
JARTS WW RTTY Contest http://jarts.jp/rules/2024_rule_en.htm	Oct-18	00:00Z	Oct-19	23:59Z	RTTY
CQWW SSB https://cqww.com/	Oct-25	00:00Z	Oct-26	23:59Z	SSB
JIDX SSB https://jidx.org/jidxrule-e.html	Nov-08	07:00Z	Nov-09	13:00Z	PH
WAE RTTY https://www.darc.de/der-club/referate/conteste/wae-dx-contest/en/ https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestdetails.php?ref=183	Nov-08	00:00Z	Nov-09	23:59Z	RTTY
SUMMER VHF UHF FIELD DAY https://www.wia.org.au/members/contests/vhfuhf/documents/2025%20Winter%20VHF-UHF%20Field%20Day%20Rules.pdf	Nov-22	00:59Z	Nov-23	00:59Z	CW, SSB, DIGI
CQWW https://cqww.com/	Nov-29	00:00Z	Nov-30	23:59Z	CW
FT CHALLENGE https://www.rttycontesting.com/ft-challenge/rules/	Dec-6	18:00Z	Dec-7	23:59Z	FT-4, FT8
ARRL 10M CONTEST https://contests.arrl.org/ContestRules/10M-Rules.pdf	Dec-13	00:00Z	Dec-14	23:59Z	PHONE, CW
OK RTTY https://www.contestcalendar.com/contestdetails.php?ref=204	Dec-20	00:00Z	Dec-20	24:00Z	RTTY

Recent Silent Keys (SK)

Well this is a another new section recommended by one of the committee members. A section to recognise the recently departed, generally known as **Silent Keys (SK)** for those only new to Amateur Radio who may not be familiar this this term and abbreviation. This can include current club members or past club members.

As a minimum we will mention their name and their month & year of passing, but if we have have a member who knew them well, and can provide a few words, maybe even a small picture, we will be pleased to post them on this page. Just email the details to committee@crarc.org.au .

Robert (Bob) Dew, VK1DE (2023) - SK

Bob was a long-term active member of the VK1 Division of the WIA (the forerunner to) and CRARC. One of his passions was maintaining the VK1RAN callsign and the running of the RAN HF net.

Diarmuid (Dermy) Battisson, VK1DB (April 2025) - SK

Dermy was a regular participant in the clubs' activities and generous to the end, as many of you have witnessed with the sale of his large collection of Amateur Radio equipment a few weeks ago, which was his and his family's wish.

Silent Keys - Gone but rarely forgotten.

Of Interest to Members

Picton Hamfest

"The Picton Show Society would like to inform amateur radio operators and radio enthusiasts of THE PICTON HAMFEST to take place on the 23rd of November 2025.

The event will be held at the Picton Show Ground 151 Menangle St Picton."

More info can be found on this page <https://iars.org.au/?p=981>

This is a great opportunity for Canberra Region Amateurs to attend a "local" Hamfest (or at least not requiring an overnight stay from Canberra)

As this is the first, we are not sure what it will be like, but considering its location, it might be well worth a visit.

WWFF National Get Together

Canberra is the focus of this years WWFF National Get Together, and looks like a fun-filled range of activities on the Friday 24th October through to Monday 27th October, 2025.

<https://www.wwffaustralia.com/2025-national-get-together.html>

However registrations close on the 10th October, and no walkups are accepted

Interesting Websites / Software for Amateurs

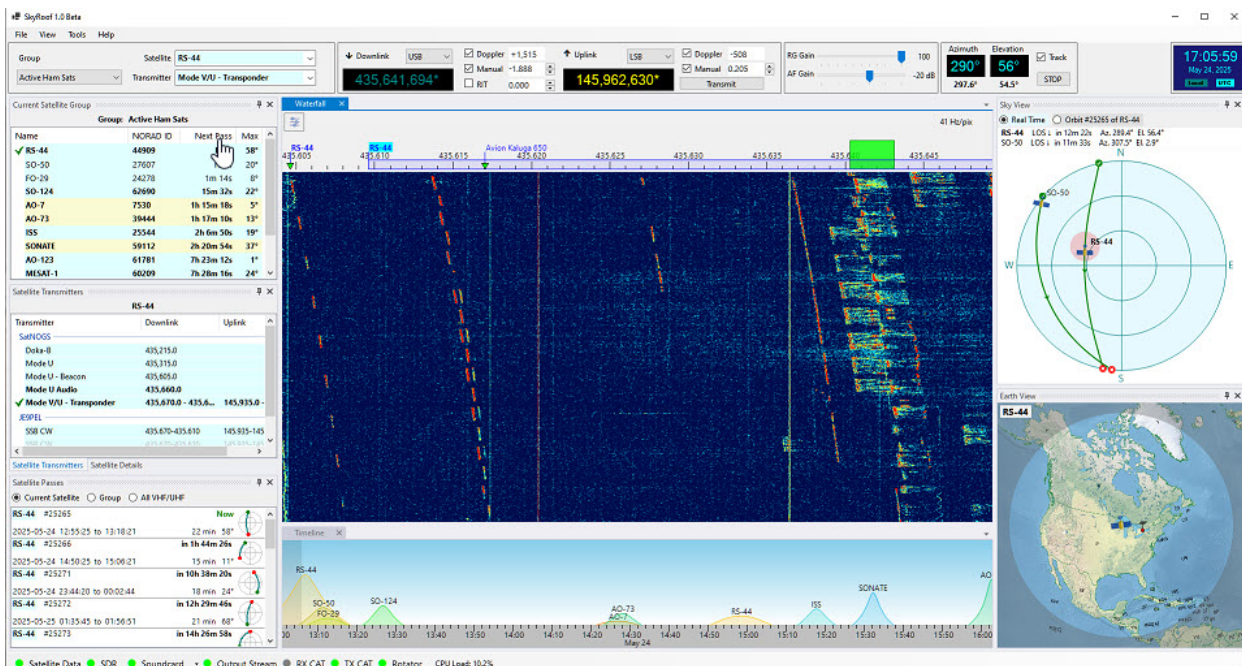
Skyroof

SkyRoof is an open source, 64-bit Windows application for Amateur and satellite enthusiasts, available on the terms of the GPL v.3 license. It combines satellite tracking and SDR functions in one program, which opens some interesting possibilities. For example, all satellite traces on the waterfall are labeled with satellite names, the boundaries of the transponder segments follow the Doppler shift, and all frequency tuning is done visually, with a mouse.

Editors Note : Whilst I have not used the SDR functionality, this application is really good for tracking satellite passes (including the ISS), and is very accurate. So if you are in to talking to or via satellite repeaters, or even getting the family into spotting satellites (and increasing their interest in the world around them), I fully recommend it. For more info : https://ve3nea.github.io/SkyRoof/users_guide/overview.html

The main features of SkyRoof are:

- detailed information about all satellites that transmit in the Ham bands;
- satellite tracking in real time;
- pass prediction for the selected satellites;
- visual representation of the current satellite position and future passes, using:
 - * Sky View - the view of the sky from your location;
 - * Earth View - the view of the Earth from the satellite;
 - * Time Line - the satellite passes on the time scale;
 - * Pass List - the details of the predicted passes;
- SDR-based waterfall display that covers the satellite segments on the VHF and UHF bands, with zoom and pan;
- SDR-based SSB/CW/FM receiver with RIT and Doppler tracking;
- audio and I/Q output to external programs via VAC or UDP;
- frequency scale with satellite names and transponder segments, Doppler-corrected;
- CAT control of an external transceiver and Antenna Rotator Control



CRARC Committee 2025

The committee is elected at the Annual General Meeting which is held in February of each year. The committee was re-elected on the 26th February 2025.

Other Offices and Areas of Responsibilities are listed as they perform a role or task that is important to the success of the club which should also be acknowledged.

Elected Committee Members

President : Matt McNeil (VK1MA)
Vice President : Carl Makin (VK1KCM)
Vice President : Graeme House (VK1IO)
Treasurer : Malcom Harrington (VK1MAL)
Secretary : Rob Fredericksen (VK1FRJ)
Membership Secretary : Graham Carter (VK1GVC)
Committee Member : Bob Fryer (VK1ED)
Committee Member : Steve Sahariv (VK2NSS)
Committee Member : Bruce Brown (VK1BB)

Other Offices and Areas of Responsibilities

Education Officer : Amanda Hawes (VK1AH)
Repeater Manager : Phil Longworth (VK1PL)
State Co-Ordinator (WICEN) - Matt McNeil (VK1MA)
Deputy State Coordinator (WICEN) : Phil Longworth (VK1PL)
Inbound QSL Manager : Steve Sahariv (VK2NSS)
Outbound QSL Manager : Mike Walkington (VK1OO)
Public Officer : Mike Walkington (VK1OO)
Newsletter Editor : Bob Fryer (VK1ED)

CRARC Region Amateur Radio Club

M : Mailbox 2-06, 20 Genge Street, Canberra ACT 2600

E : committee@crarc.org.au

W : <https://www.crarc.org.au/contact-us/>

Face to Face Meetings

Tech Night Meeting : 3rd Wednesday of each month incl. December

General Meeting : 4th Wednesday of each month except for December

Location : "Mt Mugga" Scout Hall 17 Astrolabe St, Red Hill

Note : Check the website for times / topics and other timely updates on meetings.

Sponsors

CRARC would like to acknowledge and thank the following sponsors:



Watts Communications is a family owned and operated business established in Canberra for over 25 years. Watts Communications is your one stop for all of your two-way, UHF CB radio, GPS Navigation and GPS vehicle tracking needs. Their show room features a large range of GPS and radio equipment on display and they maintain a fully equipped workshop for all repairs and maintenance needs.

CRARC is grateful to Watts Communications for providing access to their communications site on Isaacs Ridge.



We are pleased to recommend Yless4U to residents and businesses in the South Canberra region as a provider of better internet connectivity. Communities in South Canberra can now access fast, reliable and affordable internet plans through a local supplier, that is a specialist in regional (Canberra the Regional City), rural and remote connectivity. The Canberra-based business has been steadily gaining the trust of former Signal Co. customers, thanks to the strength and reliability of its network.

CRARC is already benefiting from Yless4U's enhanced services, and we are pleased to promote these advantages to our listeners and subscribers. To get connected, visit yless4u.com.au to explore plan options and check availability in your area.

Alternatively, contact the Yless4U helpdesk for personalised assistance on 02 6230 3699.



Special Mentions

CRARC would like to acknowledge and thank the following companies for their generosity and donation of equipment to the club

