

theTARCinc Events Calendar

February

- Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tsvl UHF Repeater & TubbyNet
Tuesday Feb 24 starts 7-30pm

March

- TARC Management Meeting
Tuesday March 3 starts 7-30pm
- TARC Project Night
Tuesday March 10 starts 7-30pm
- TARC Social Meeting
Tuesday March 17 starts 7-30pm
- TARC John Moyle Field Day Weekend – Mount Fox
Fri March 20 to Sun March 22
- Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tsvl UHF Repeater & TubbyNet
Tuesday March 24 starts 7-30pm
- TARC Tech On The Air Net – Tsvl VHF Repeater & PQNet
Tuesday March 31 starts 7-30pm

April

- B2B Blue Hills Bash Easter Endurance Rides Bluewater Park
Thursday 2 to Monday 6 April
- TARC Management Meeting
Tuesday April 7 starts 7-30pm
- TARC Project Night
Tuesday April 14 starts 7-30pm
- NQORA Gold City 450 Off Road Racing
Saturday 18 to Sunday 19 April
- TARC Social Meeting
Tuesday April 21 starts 7-30pm
- AM and CW on ANZAC Day at the Bunker & the Crater
Friday April 25 from 9am
- Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tsvl UHF Repeater & TubbyNet
Tuesday April 28 starts 7-30pm

May

- TARC Management Meeting
Tuesday May 5 starts 7-30pm
- MARS – RADAR Clairview Gathering at the BarraCrab
Friday 8 to Sunday 12 May
- TARC Project Night
Tuesday May 12 starts 7-30pm
- B2B Autumn Escalade Horse Endurance Rides Bluewater Park
Saturday May 16 to Sunday May 17
- TARC Social Meeting
Tuesday May 19 starts 7-30pm
- Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tsvl UHF Repeater & TubbyNet
Tuesday May 26 starts 7-30pm
- WRERA Euri Gold Tropical Winter Horse Endurance Rides
Saturday May 30 to Sunday May 31

more details inside ! - also check out
<https://thetarcinc.weebly.com>
and listen into the news nets for updates

GLOBAL RADIO EVENTS

WIA John Moyle Memorial Field Day - 21 to 22 Mar
AM & CW on ANZAC Day – Sat 25 April
WIA AGM & Albury/Wodonga VK Summit – 2 to 3 May
MARA-RADAR Clairview Gathering – 8 to 12 May
CHARC AGM Weekend - Emerald 19 to 21 Sept
Jamboree On The Air – Fri 16 to Sun 18 Oct

place
170 CENT stamp
here

SURFACE
MAIL



The Townsville
Amateur Radio Club Inc.
P.O. Box 333,
Garbutt East, QLD 4814.

BACKSCATTER

February 2026



SISTER CLUB
BY4RSA NANJING

WICEN
The Amateur Radio
Communications group for
EMERGENCIES



BACK – SCATTER

THE MAGAZINE OF RENOWN – SINCE JANUARY 1969



THE TOWNSVILLE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB INC.

P.O. Box 333, Garbutt East, QLD. 4814.

VK4WIT-VK4ATV-VK4RAT-VK4RTL

AMATEUR RADIO – remaining prepared for this Cyclone Season – February 2026



BACK-SCATTER is the official bulletin of The Townsville Amateur Radio Club Inc. with QTH upstairs at S.E.S. Headquarters, Green St., West End, Townsville.
 POSTAL address is: **P.O. Box 333 Garbutt East, QLD 4814.**
 Voice Contact Phone: **0427 182469**
 Full membership \$45 p.a., Seniors, Student, Pension & Remote Member (more than 200km from Townsville) \$25 p.a.
 Subs are due at 30th June and can be paid in person or via Internet Direct Transfer. Details for direct transfer -
 Account Name – The Townsville Amateur Radio Club In Bank - Bendigo
 BSB 633000 Account Number 230033540 Reference (your surname or callsign)
 - email Treasurer with details as well, otherwise your payment might be missed !

Note that except where stated, the opinions expressed herein may not be the official opinion of theTARCinc.

homepage = <https://thetarcinc.weebly.com>
 e-mail = thetarcinc@gmail.com
 Facebook Search = [tarc townsville amateur radio club](https://www.facebook.com/tarc-townsville-amateur-radio-club)

President **Snow Herodes VK4ME**
 phone - 0439 159403 pk4me@bigpond.com
Vice President **Richard Goodhew VK4PQV**
 phone - 0400 339543 richardgoodhew@bigpond.com
Treasurer **Peter Harrex VK4PQ**
 phone - 0407 177841 peter.harrex@bigpond.com
Secretary & Editor **Gavin Reibelt VK4ZZ**
 phone - 0427 182469 vk4zz@outlook.com.au

Local Nets - some TARCadians participate in these nets
WIA News Net - each Sunday morning on VK4RAT 2m repeater at 9am to transmit WIA National and QNEWS followed by a callback session.
North Queensland Net - Sunday evenings at 7-30pm on 3605.4 kHz and relayed on the VK4RAT 2m repeater from 8pm. VK4WIT net control.
Ann Renton Memorial Ladies Net - Fourth Tuesday of the Month from 7-30pm VK4RAT UHF repeater. XYL's and YL's especially welcome.
Tech On The Air Net - Fifth Tuesday of the Month from 7-30pm VK4RAT VHF repeater. NZART-News TX plus Techtalk.
GNARLY Net - All the Morse and Talk you can eat before breakfast - on 3600kHz, Morse starts 5-30am-ish, Voice starts about 6-30am
Australian YSF Net - Get your Fusion on - every Thursday from 7-30pm on the VK4OO YSF West End Repeater - listen 438.75, send 431.75MHz.



WICEN North Queensland Group
 - Co-ordinator 2025 Gavin "og" Reibelt VK4ZZ
 0427 182469 or email vk4zz@outlook.com.au
 Emergency listening frequencies during activation
 7110 kHz and 3600 kHz

VK4RWI Portable Repeater (when active)
 70cm 438.625 MHz OUT, 433.625 MHz IN
 Frequencies to use when Repeaters are down - 146.5 and 439MHz
 WICEN QLD State-wide nets Sunday morning
 at 0800K on 14125 or 10122kHz & 0830K on 7105 kHz.



AMCA Amateur Radio Assessment Service
 At least 3 weeks notice required to stage an assessment, longer notice preferred.

Specialist Level in - Brisbane - Laurie/VK4BLE 0411 413588
 General Level in - Townsville - Lyndall/VK4ZM 0427 688014
 Malanda - Stu/VK4SDD 0407 700096 Sarina - Roy/VK4RM 0409 597410
 Rockhampton - Clive/VK4ACC 0429 632815
 Mt Isa - Darrin/VK4GEO 0418 981353



TARC News Transmission Operators
AM - Denis VK4AE, Lyndall VK4ZM, Richard VK4PQV, Peter VK4PQ, Gavin VK4ZZ.
PM - Gavin VK4ZZ, Lyndall VK4ZM, Richard VK4PQV, Peter VK4PQ.



TARC Ladies Group
 an informal gathering of YLs and XYLs interested in Amateur Radio and allied activities. Established January 1989 by Ann Renton VK4MUM (sk). The group have a natter during the Ladies Net on the Townsville UHF Voice Repeater and VK4TUB 46740 AllStarLink or VK4TUB 837230 Echolink Nodes 4th Tuesday of the month.
 Co-ordinator Lyndall Reibelt 0427 688014



TARC Meetings :
Management Meeting - First Tuesday of the month,
Project Nights - Second Tuesday of the month,
Social / Backscatter Meeting - Third Tuesday of the month,
 all start from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms, 27 Green Street West End.

For meeting dates please consult the events calendar on the cover of this magazine .

Last month's secret word was **treasure**
 This month's secret word is **...**

Electronic Back-scatrer is best read in Adobe Acrobat Reader available for your ops at <https://get.adobe.com/reader/> remember to untick the optional offers before downloading.

This months' fortune cookie:-

" Blood is thicker than water--and much tastier "

Regional Voice Repeaters and Gateways (all frequencies in MHz)

Locale	Callsign	Input	Output
Hann Tableland	VK4RHT	146.075	146.675 123Hz Tone
Cairns (Mt Haren)	VK4RCA	145.4125	147.0125 123Hz Tone
Cairns (AllStarLink 599730)	VK4RSB	145.625	147.225 110.9Hz Tone
(Trinity Beach)	VK4RSB	431.100	438.100 131.8Hz Tone
Cairns Rydge's City Centre	VK4RCA	434.850	439.850 91.5Hz Tone
Tolga (Bones Knob)	VK4RBK	434.900	439.900
Malanda FM/C4FM/WIRES-X	VK4RSD	146.250	146.850
Millaa Millaa (McHugh Lookout)	VK4RPH	145.4625	147.0625 123Hz Tone
Townsville Region	VK4RAT	146.100	146.700
(Mt Stuart)	VK4RAT	433.225	438.225 91.5Hz Tone
West End FM/C4FM/WIRES-X	VK4OO	431.750	438.750 91.5Hz Tone
Bowen Region	VK4RAB	431.375	438.375 91.5Hz Tone
(Reservoir Hill)	VK4RAB	146.125	146.725 91.5Hz Tone
Collinsville (Town Site)	VK4RAC	147.125	147.725 91.5Hz Tone
Mt Isa (Four Mile Hill)	VK4RMI	146.100	146.700 91.5Hz Tone
Midge Point (Conder Hills)	VK4RMP	146.200	146.800 IRLP 6037
Mackay 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RBY	146.050	146.650 Multimode
(Black Mountain) 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RBY	433.600	438.600 Multimode
Sarina 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RSA	146.075	146.675 12.5kHz BW
(Jordan Creek)	VK4RSA	434.625	439.625 IRLP 6037
	VK4RSA	52.800	53.800
St Lawrence (Mt Edward)	VK4RDL	147.775	147.175 91.5Hz Tone
Nebo 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RBM	146.175	146.775 IRLP 6741
(Blue Mountain) 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RBM	434.300	439.300 Multimode
(Mount Seaview)	VK4RRR	146.375	146.975 91.5Hz Tone
Moranbah	VK4RAS	146.275	146.875 91.5Hz Tone
(Carborough Range)	VK4RAS	434.950	439.950 91.5Hz Tone
Clermont	VK4RHR	146.325	146.925 IRLP 6037
(Hodgson Range)	VK4RHR	433.500	438.500
Emerald	VK4CWL	146.550	146.550 91.5Hz Tone
Rockhampton Region	VK4RAR	146.100	146.700 IRLP 6973
(Mt Archer) 91.5Hz Tone	VK4RAR	433.225	438.225 IRLP 6037
Blackdown Tableland	VK4RBD	146.350	146.950 IRLP 6037
Springure (Roddas Lookout)	VK4RSP	146.225	146.825 IRLP 6037

Regional APRS Digipeaters and Gateways on 145.175MHz

located near Atherton, Cairns, Mount Isa, Townsville, Midge Point, Sarina, St Lawrence, Nebo, Moranbah, Clermont, Emerald, Middlemount, Blackwater, Springure, Rockhampton.

Regional and Portable All Access Analogue Gateways

Cairns Echolink/IRLP	VK4JKL	146.550MHz 123Hz Tone
Kirwan AllStarLink/Echolink	VK4TUB	VK4RAT UHF Repeater
Kelso AllStarLink/Echolink	VK4PQ	VK4RAT VHF Repeater
Condon AllStarLink	VK4BDE	145.145MHz 91.5Hz Tone
Heatley AllStarLink	VK4OT	439.325MHz HH Interface
Charters Towers AllStarLink VHF	VK4GDN	145.145MHz 91.5Hz Tone
Charters Towers AllStarLink UHF	VK4GDN	439.150MHz 91.5Hz Tone
Portable AllStarLink ShariPi	VK4HSV	439.125MHz 91.5Hz Tone
Mount Isa Echolink/IRLP	VK4MIC	VK4RMI VHF Repeater
Mackay AllStarLink/Echolink	VK4DW	145.350MHz 91.5Hz Tone

Regional and Portable Digital Gateways

Rangewood WIRES-X Fusion	VK4JPA	145.350MHz
Rasmussen MultiMode	VK4BDE	145.145MHz

Regional Packet FBBS :

	Callsign	
Townsville Region	VK4OT-3	145.175MHz 1200bd

(Telnet with p/w access also available vk4ot.ddns.net port 6300)

Regional Beacons

		Output
10m Mt Stuart (Townsville)	VK4RTL	28.270 CW id
6m Hann Tableland (Atherton Tlands)	VK4RHT	50.281 CW id
Mt Stuart (Townsville)	VK4RTL	50.282 CW id
2m Hann Tableland (Atherton Tlands)	VK4RHT	144.446 CW id
Mt Stuart (Townsville)	VK4RTL	144.445
70cm Mt Stuart (Townsville)	VK4RTL	432.445 CW id
23cm Mt Stuart (Townsville)	VK4RTL	1296.444 CW id

Weather Information on HF
VMC Charleville 2201, 4426, 6507, 8176kHz USB

NT, QLD, NSW, VIC, TAS, SA areas

VMW Wiluna 2056, 4149, 6230, 8113kHz USB

NT, WA, SA areas

Stations transmit Marine Weather Warnings on the hour



ATTENDING: At the Club Rooms
VK4's. ZZ, ME, PQV, FUU, ZMB,
HSV, FUDO, BDE, IGM

ATTENDING: via Zoom Session ID – 746 7316 4219
VK4's PQ, XA, YT, OIL, GFR, WSG, JBY

VISITORS: Andrew Hawken VK4CHG

APOLOGIES: VK4's. UCM, JPA, ICA, KMA, EMF, DNF, JWC, LKG, FCRH, FIBW, FBNP, CK, CD, PAL, TJS, HCZ, RO, TTW, WDM, KGH, KN, MIK, PA, OT, ZON, ZT, KMD, YMD, FNQ, FRYL, OO, MSS, AE, GWA, KDF, FVC, PJH, AFW, ZWC, DJC, ALS, WJ, TSV, KEE, YWG, GUN, TUB, CMW, PE, JPA, GED, MRG, GDN, AEX, TEW, ZM, AAH, VK1ZZ, Joan McDonell, Roslyn Bryant, Rhonda Wilks, Peter Renton, Wendy Schinkel, Derek Goodhew, Toni Goodhew, Jeanette Mann, Noelene Melrose, Nell Crabb, Kerry Wright, Cate Gooda, Bill Walker, Kev Chillout, Brad Payn, Vallerie Payn.

Business commenced at 1931h with the meeting chaired by the President Snow/VK4ME. Snow welcomed all attending, greeting members and called for any apologies.

SILENT KEYS:

- Ian Browne VK4DB

Sad news received from Denise/VK4FCDB, board of control of Ian/VK4DB that Ian went Silent Key on Wednesday 26th November 2025 at Townsville University Hospital following complications caused by lung cancer.

Ian was farewelled at a private funeral on Tuesday 2nd December 2026 in Townsville attended by close family members.

Ian was a morseaholic and a very keen DXer on 10metres and above, improving his operating skills on Amateur Radio using training he had been given as a serving member of the Queensland Police Service. Knowing Morse Code was a vital skill for those serving in QPS and involved with communications in years gone by and Ian used those skills well while on transfer to various postings across the state and was one of the last Morse Operators with QPS when the morse code service ended in 1972.

Ian attained the Second Class Amateur Radio ticket in 1962 and passed the First Class level in 1963 but had to wait until he was 18 before obtaining VK4DB, a ham for 63 years. He operated extensively on 10, 6 and 2 metres mainly on CW but also on SSB over the years. He was also keen to try new modes, dabbling in Packet Radio, APRS, SSTV, RTTY, PSK31, Olivia and JT65 to mention just a few.

While stationed in Cairns in the late 1960s Ian ran instruction classes in Amateur Radio and had many candidates successfully attain their licences. For a while Ian was also President of the Cairns Club. Having postings on the coast enabled Ian to also indulge in his other favourite activity, sports-fishing.

Ian was a long time member of the Wireless Institute of Australia and while stationed and eventually retiring in Townsville was a long time member of The Townsville Amateur Radio Club Inc. Ian's enthusiasm for DX and furthering the knowledge of those in the wonderful world of Amateur Radio will be sorely missed.

Vale Ian Browne VK4DB, Silent Key.

- Ray Hinks VK4LU

Sad new to report that TARC Life Member Ray Hinks VK4LU has gone Silent Key.

Ray was a former member of the Queensland Police Service, a foundation member of the Townsville Civil Defence Volunteers,

The TOWNSVILLE AMATEUR RADIO CLUB Inc.

**Minutes of
Management
Meeting
Held on
the 3rd of
February 2026 at
the Club Rooms
SES HQ, Green
Street, West End**

and volunteer with the Townsville Division of the Queensland State Emergency Service.

Ray came to Australia with his family from the UK when only a nipper but could remember the bleak weather in blighty. He much enjoyed the tropical weather of Townsville, constantly scoffed the weather boffins forecast for rain and rugged up well when the temperature in North Queensland dipped below 15C.

Ray did great things for theTARCinc, serving as Treasurer and also setting up through the local federal members of Parliament permission to print the magazine of renown, Back-scatter, an arrangement that continues to this day.

While in good health Ray was also active on HF and out in the field, helping with many comms support events. He was an early experimenter in Packet Radio, starting with a C64 and Digicom and eventually taming Windows with TST-Host and TPK before moving to Linux and exploring low signal modes. He was also a regular participant of the North Queensland Net and the WIA News Callback Nets.

He enjoyed holidays away fruit picking and occasionally touring the Cape in his old but reliable Hi-Lux van (he went places with the 2-wheel drive vehicle many 4wd drivers would avoid) and always said that he would be lucky to see 70years old.

Well, he made it to 92.

During the last year Rays's health started to decline even more and a diagnosis of Stage 4 Cancer sealed the deal. He enrolled in the Volunteer Assisted Dying scheme, set his affairs in order and went Silent Key in Townsville University Hospital on Friday 23rd January at 0400UTC. Before passing between 0335 and 0338UTC Ray's daughter Yvette went on-air as Ray's Second Operator through the Townsville VHF Repeater and asked for any stations to send Ray any last messages. TARC Club Station VK4WIT responded, wishing Ray good DX and best journeys on his DXpedition in the next world.

Ray's funeral was a private service attended by family members.

Vale Ray Hinks VK4LU - Silent Key.

NEW MEMBERS:

Andrew Hawken VK4CHG

Andrew has had a long time interest in information and radio technology and has experience in those fields as an occupation. He is currently billeted with Defence Communications in Townsville and recently was successful in attaining a Foundation Amateur Radio Licence and is now studying with the little spare time he has to upgrade to Standard level. Andrew also has an interest in electrotechnology education and training and wants to increase his knowledge in the RF field through experimentation. He would like to become a member of the Club to participate in activities which will help in this knowledge expansion.

MOTION to accept Andrew Hawken as a member of the Club

1) Gavin Reibelt/VK4ZZ 2) Snow Herodes/VK4ME

Motion 202602001 Moved by Gavin Reibelt/VK4ZZ and seconded by Snow Herodes/VK4ME that Andrew Hawken/VK4CHG becomes a member of the Club.

- CARRIED unanimously with applause.

SHOW AND TELL:

Ben/VK4YT – recounted one of his current projects and showed the temperature controller for the 4WD Canopy – controls a 12V fan to cool the cargo area/refrigeration modules to improve efficiency.

Gavin/VK4ZZ – showed a recent acquisition from the land of Ali-Excess, a USB powered mozzie pad repeller which can be used when doing portable ops to keep the biteys at bay.

ACCEPTING PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

Accept the minutes for the December 2025 Management Meeting as printed in Back-scatter.

Motion 202602002 moved to be accepted by Gavin/VK4ZZ and seconded by Wayne/VK4WSG – CARRIED unanimously.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

- Nil

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Secretary, Gavin/VK4ZZ detailed the following correspondence...

Inwards. 25 articles, Outwards. 7 articles, as detailed in the Correspondence Log with the most noteworthy being:

- Ergon Energy – Electricity Account Mount Stuart Repeater Site for December and January
- DMFS Townsville – Information for Welcome to Townsville Expo Sat 31st January 2026
- WIA, Amateur Radio Magazine Volume 93 Number 6 2025
- WIA VK4 Inwards QSL Bureau, QSL Cards for VK4DG VK4FNQT VK4KEE VK4ME VK4OO VK4PQ VK4RO VK4TUB VK4WDM VK4XA
- RSGB, Radcom Magazine January 2026
- Richard Goodhew VK4PQV – Reports for February Management meeting
- Lyndall Reibelt VK4ZM – Reports for February Management Meeting
- Peter Harrex VK4PQ – Report for February Management Meeting
- TARC Financial Members – Notifications for Management Meeting, Project Night and Social Evening
- TARC Financial & Honorary Members & Complementaries – Back-scatter December 2025
- TARC Financial Members – Mount Isa Amateur Radio Group January and February Newsletters
- TARC Financial Members – Silent Key notices Ian Browne/VK4DB and Ray Hinks/VK4LU
- TARC Financial Members – Management Meeting Agenda so far
- Andrew Hawken – Application for membership of the Club
- Ron Ostrenski/VK4JBY – Notice of Failure to Comply with Motion and Motion to appoint additional Facebook Admin

Motion 202602003 Accept the Secretary's Report. Moved by Gavin/VK4ZZ, Seconded by Wayne/VK4WSG – CARRIED unanimously.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM SECRETARY REPORT:

- Ron Ostrenski/VK4JBY – Notice of Failure to Comply with Motion and Motion to appoint additional Facebook Admin for General Business.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Peter/VK4PQ presented the Treasurers Report to the meeting and asked for questions before asking the meeting to accept the report.

Motion 202602004 Accept the Treasurer's Report. Moved by Peter/VK4PQ, Seconded by Jeff/VK4XA – CARRIED unanimously.

EX-OFFICIO REPORTS:**ASSESSMENTS CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:**

- Gavin/VK4ZZ reported :
ACMA runs the Amateur Radio Assessors Service.
- Specialist Assessors available for remote or online assessments are
Laurie Pritchard/VK4BLE in Brisbane on 0411413588,
Ron Bertrand/VK2DQ on Gold Coast on 0426771808,
Gail Lidden/VK4ION in Bundaberg on 0410121345,
- General Assessors available for face to face assessments in the regions
Stuart Dunk/VK4SDD in Malanda on 0407700096,
Bob Ronai/VK4BOB in Cairns on 0438323737,
Howard Small/VK4BS in Cairns on 0425825799,
Darrin Archer/VK4GEO in Mount Isa on 0418981353,
Eric Baker/VK2TRD in Mount Isa on 0427703693,
Lyndall Reibelt/VK4ZM in Townsville on 0427688014,
Roy Moore/VK4RM in Sarina on 0409597410,
Clive Sait/VK4ACC in Rockhampton on 0429632815,
Ray Dobinson/VK4XXX in Rockhampton on 07 49281219
Lawrie Ellis/VK4LE in Gladstone on 0477166712
If you do not get an answer on these numbers, be sure to

leave a message otherwise, you will be treated as a bogus caller and possibly blocked.

For a full list of assessors, information on the Exam Service and the Amateur Radio service in Australia, surf to the ACMA website and search for Amateur Radio Accredited Assessors. An assessment took place during December with the candidate being successful.

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Gavin VK4ZZ reported :

Callouts – Nil

Communications Support – nil events.

2026 Comms Support - Notes on events –

The only clash we have so far is Saturday 15th August with a Euri Gold Horsie Ride and the Maggie Island Swim happening on the same day. Please have a look at the events list and see if you can help out with one of the events. The rides that the Mackay Amateur Radio Association handle with the Valley Riders Endurance Riding Association at Denison Creek have had date changes – shown in the events list. The only event to be notified in our regular events is Kennedy Region Scout Nighthawk 2026. Thanks to everyone who have already nominated to help with events!

2026 Comms Support Events so far -

Thu 2 April to Mon 6 April - B2B Blue Hills Bash Easter Horse Endurance Rides 5/20/40/80km with possible 120 and 160km rides

- NQ Equestrian Centre Bluewater Park

Operators so far - VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, VK4CUZ, VK4HSV, VK4IGM, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.

Sat 18 to Sun 19 April - NQORA Markwell Gold City 450 QLD Championship Round Off Road Racing Millchester MSRC near Charters Towers.

Operators so far - VK1ZZ, VK4ZMB, VK4ZM & VK4ZZ, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.

Sat 16 to Sun 17 May - Bush to Beach Endurance Ride Assoc. Autumn Escalade Horse Endurance Rides 5/20/4/80

- NQ Equestrian Centre Bluewater Park

Operators so far - VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, many more operators needed.

Fri 29 May to Sun 31 May - Whitsunday Regional Endurance Riding Assoc. 5/10/20/30/40/80km/Harness Tropical Winter Horse Endurance Rides - Euri Gold Farms near Bowen

Operators so far - VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, Doris & VK4WSG, many more ops muchly needed.

Sat 27 to Sun 28 June - NQORA Millchester Challenge Off Road Racing Millchester MSRC near Charters Towers

Operators so far - VK1ZZ, VK4ZMB, VK4ZM & VK4ZZ, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.

Sat 27 to Sun 28 June - Valley Riders Endurance Riding Assoc.

2x20/2x40/1x80k (Ops by MARA Inc.) Dee Jay Arabians Horse Endurance Rides

- Denison Creek near Nebo

Operators so far - VK4CUZ, VK4HAN, Bruce, VK4JLK, many more operators needed.

Sat 18 to Sun 19 July - Bush to Beach Endurance Ride Assoc. Paluma Passion 5/10/20/40/80km Horse Endurance Rides 5/10/20/40/80

- NQ Equestrian Centre Bluewater Park

Operators so far - VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, Doris & VK4WSG, many more operators needed.

Sat 1 to Sun 2 August - Valley Riders Endurance Riding Assoc.

2x20/2x40/100E (Ops by MARA Inc.) Greg Willoughby Memorial Horse Endurance Rides - Denison Creek near Nebo

Operators so far - VK4CUZ, VK4HAN, VK4ZZ & VK4ZM, Bruce, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.

Fri 14 to Sun 16 August - Whitsunday Regional Endurance Riding Assoc. 5/10/20/30/40/80km/Harness Winter Harvest Horse Endurance Rides

- Euri Gold Farms near Bowen

Operators so far - VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, Doris & VK4WSG, many more operators needed.

Sat 15 August - Townsville Open Water Swimming Assoc. 2026

Magnetic Island to Townsville Open Water Swim

- assemble from 5-30am Strand Park, Picnic Bay, Cleveland Bay

Operators so far - VK4FUU, VK4AAH, VK4IGM, more operators needed.

Sat 22 to Sun 23 August - NQORA Pato's 7 Hour Enduro Off Road Racing Millchester MSRC near Charters Towers

Operators so far - VK1ZZ, VK4ZMB, VK4ZM & VK4ZZ, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.

Sat 5 to Sun 6 September - Bush to Beach Endurance Ride Assoc.

Spring Shore 5/10/20/40/80km Horse Endurance Rides 5/10/20/40/80 - NQ Equestrian Centre Bluewater Park

Operators so far VK4ZZ, VK4ZM, Doris & VK4WSG, many more operators needed.
 Sat 10 to Sun 11 October - NQORA Charters Towers Short Course Off Road Racing Millchester MSRC near Charters Towers
 Operators so far - VK1ZZ, VK4ZMB, VK4ZM & VK4ZZ, Doris & VK4WSG, more operators needed.
 If you can help out with any of the events please contact Gavin/VK4ZZ on 0427182469 or on the wireless.

TECHNICIAN REPORT:

- Kerry/VK4TUB had no report for this month.

STATION MANAGERS REPORT:

- Gavin/VK4ZZ reported :
- Club Station gear - functioning well.
- Club Mt Stuart gear - functioning well. 2m voice repeater good, 70cm voice repeater online, UHF CB repeater online, APRS digipeater good. 23cm Beacon good.
- Training for Assessments - Training for assessments took place during December.
- VK4WIT Operations - A portable operation in conjunction with the Australia Day Long Week Family Radio Camp took place with the running of the North Queensland Net on Sunday evening January 25th at the Flinders Region Girl Guides Training Centre Bluewater.
- VK4ATV Operations - No portable operations this month.
- VK4ATV WSPR Beacons - Spotted on - 6metres: VK4TVL (thanks Lloyd), 10metres: VK7OO, 15m: EA8BFF, VE6JY, KD7EFG-1, ZL2000SWL, VK6PVL, VK7EKA and closer VK stations, 20metres: EA8BFF, K9CZI, KPH1, KFS/SW, ZL2BCI, VK6QS and closer VK stations, 40metres: KFS/SW, ZL2005SWL, VK7ZCF, VK5HW, VK3AG, VK2AMA, VK4XDB, VK4TMH, VK4HRE, VK4DL/SDR1 and other VK stations, 80metres: VK5ARG, VK4TMH, VK6QA, VK4DL/SDR1. During the time propagation has been affected by a number of severe solar storms, culminating with a series of visible aurora well above 40degrees south latitude.
- North Queensland Net - All nets going good, participation is good with participants experimenting with ways to defeat the usual summer thunderstorm static and fading caused by solar storms.
- More treasure has been donated, much thanks to all.
- Kerry/VK4TUB has kindly donated a Ramsay Comms Test Set to the Club - the equipment has been installed at the Club Radio Shack to be used for the testing and repair of radio equipment.
- Once the wet season weather improves Kerry/VK4TUB intends to complete the rack replacement and DC/RF rewire project, with some interruption to repeater, beacon and digipeater services that could last up to a week. Kerry is formulating a plan to minimise service disruption.

LIBRARIAN REPORT:

- Ashley/VK4FUU reported all going well with many magazines available for members to peruse or lend.

FACILITIES CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Phil/VK4HSV reported :

Pole Ladder (with Snow/VK4ME) work in progress dependent on weather conditions. During a site visit by Phil/VK4HSV and Ian/VK4ZT to figure out the water leak issue Ian voiced misgivings regarding the plan to have the pole ladder go all the way to ground level, as anyone gaining access over the fence into the site grounds might access the pole ladder and have an accident (and possibly die). Snow is considering having the first section of the ladder to be removable and stowable secure inside the repeater hut.

Storm Door Seal Phil did an extra measure of the door before submitting the order into the supplier. Unfortunately the supplier delivered a seal that did not quite fit without some on-site modification by Phil and Snow. The modified seal is working well with some final heat sealing of the corners to be completed.

Rewire Project Phil and Kerry/VK4TUB have agreed to put the rewire job on hold until the waterproofing project is completed and successful.

Waterproofing Project Phil explained how the top of the Repeater Hut connects to its walls and that the current edging is not doing its job to seal the join. Phil and Snow conducted a survey of the Repeater Hut walls with a moisture/temperature sensor and found there was moisture in all 4 walls with the worst being the wall on the battery tube/meter box side with a

reading of 22% with the most likely mechanism of water ingress being flow off the top of the roof into cracks and porous parts of the top join mortar. Some options to solve the issue in order of most expense are - build an extra roof and flashing on top of the Repeater Hut (expense and maintenance, most metal things corrode away at the site) or apply a staged deployment of Wakaflex lead free bitumen impregnated adhesive flashing in conjunction with outdoor grade Sikaflex polyurethane sealant/adhesive first to the join on the most leaky side of the Repeater Hut and gauge the success of the treatment. Ian/VK4ZT Discussion took place regarding the different options along with extra information that Phil and Ian had collated regarding the Wakaflex option plus a question regarding the requirement for scaffolding for the deployment (suggested that the repair could be done working from the Repeater Hut roof.)

Motion 202602005 That the Club authorise Phil/VK4HSV and helpers to go ahead with the staged repair of the leaky joins on the Repeater Hut with a budget of \$1000 for materials.

Moved by Snow/VK4ME, Seconded by Brett/VK4BDE
 - CARRIED unanimously.

LADIES GROUP CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Lyndall/VK4ZM, reported via Gavin/VK4ZZ :
 Two nets happened during December and January.
 The Ann Renton Memorial Net happened on Tuesday 23rd December at 0930UTC. The net started on the Townsville UHF repeater incorporating the VK4TUB AllStarLink 46740 and Echolink 837219 nodes, however due to a transceiver to radio port fault on the node the decision was made to conduct the net on the Townsville VHF repeater incorporating the VK4PQ AllStarLink 49806 and Echolink 956580 nodes plus the VK4GDN AllStarLink 54043 VHF node in Charters Towers. The net consisted of 2 rounds followed by a Ta Ta round with Gavin/VK4ZZ as net control.

Via VOIP modes

Robert/VK2DY, Kellyville Ridge, NSW, Australia via Echolink/VK2DY/VK4PQ

Keep being kicked off the node - the networks are wobbly tonight. 21C and a bit cloudy. 32C during the day.
 Still in shock after the Bondi Massacre, it has put a different slant on things here. Have been doing Christmas Lights Tours through Hills Shire and Blacktown City, some very nice displays. Doing Christmas at Moss Vale with family. Spending New Years Eve at a nephew's flat, the balcony has a great view of the fireworks on the harbour. Traffic mayhem that night so will travel there via Metro.

Via the Townsville VHF repeater were

Peter/VK4PQ, Kelso, North QLD, Australia

Battling with some email issues. Family up from Brisbane visiting over Christmas, looking forward to spoiling the grandkids again. Notice some instability on the networks tonight. Ok on leaving breaks, Fusion and DMR way worse than operators on AllStarLink and Echolink.

Ben/VK4YT, Kelso, North QLD, Australia

Appears to be lots of issues tonight with AllStarLink and Echolink connections. Have toured some local Christmas Lights, lots locally. Spending Christmas with the parents in Innisfail, will be bringing back a tower in sections to the new QTH.

Lyndall/VK4ZM, Vincent, North QLD, Australia

A couple of Amateur Radio assessments completed this month. Having Christmas Lunch with daughter and extended tribe this year.

Snow/VK4ME, Kirwan, North QLD, Australia

Transmitting tonight on the new Quansheng Taiko-Kong TK11 Hand Held. Did a Park Activation with Tubby/VK4TUB during the last month at Pallarenda, proved the concept of double V dipoles as a directional array in the field. Doggy Daycare at the moment, 3 pooches luxuriating in air conditioned comfort. 5am start today, Pilates first followed by a dip in the pool, doggie feeding, grocery shopping, keeping out of a very warm day in the air con.

Net controller Gavin alerted the net to the following news from Gary/VK4OO

The VK4OO West End Townsville Yaesu Fusion 2 Repeater 438.750MHz linked to AUS-REPEATER-NET is currently running low power transmit. Gary/VK4OO found that users out in Fusion-land (it's also an issue with DMR, P25, D-Star, Echolink & AllStarLink ops) do not allow enough time between overs to allow timeout timers and nodes to reset - in this instance the repeater was transmitting nearly all the time and nuked it's final amp. VK4OO is currently operating on 10watts output and Gary is waiting on replacement final amp components to arrive.

The net concluded at 1026UTC after the ta ta round was completed and the Net Controller wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe return for the January 2026 Net.

The next ARMN will be happening on Tuesday 27th January at 0930UTC on the Townsville UHF Voice Repeater incorporating the VK4TUB AllStarLink 46740 and Echolink 837219 nodes. Remember too that the Tech on the Air net will be happening on Wednesday 31st December from 0930UTC then on Tuesday 31st March 2026 on the Townsville VHF repeater incorporating the VK4PQ AllStarLink 49806 and Echolink 956580 nodes along with the VK4GDN AllStarLink 54043 145.145MHz Node.

73's Lyndall/VK4ZM

The Ann Renton Memorial Net happened on Tuesday 27th January at 0930UTC, celebrating the 37th year the Townsville Ladies Net has been running. The net was held on the Townsville UHF repeater incorporating the VK4TUB AllStarLink 46740 and Echolink 837219 nodes.

The net consisted of 2 rounds followed by a Ta Ta round with Gavin/VK4ZZ as net control.

Via VOIP modes

Robert/VK2DY, Kellyville Ridge, NSW, Australia via Echolink/VK2DY/VK4PQ

A nice day today with 29C temp. Spent Australia Day onboard the National Maritime Museum Tall Ship James Craig cruising about Sydney Harbour taking in all the aquatic events including the Ferry Race and observed the RAAF flyover, a great day out. About to start to put together the QRP Labs transceiver kit, with mind to using it in FT8 mode. The M1KE device has developed a charging fault so it has gone back to the manufacturers in Estonia for fault finding and fixing.

Ron/VK4JBY, Enoggera, QLD, Australia via Echolink/VK4JBY/VK4PQ

Heatwave conditions at the moment and there has been lots of power load shedding in Brisbane. Need to acquire some 12v fans to hook up to the auxiliary battery to keep comfy during the outages. Did Australia Day at the Redcliffe Amateur Radio Club Oz Day event, it was cooler closer to the coast and there were some great Oz activities like Throwing the Thong, communal burger cook-up and, thanks to a member who owns a trawler, consume great quantities of fresh King Prawns.

Ryan/VK4DAT, Mount Isa, QLD, Australia via AllStarLink/VK4DAT/VK4PQ

Checking in and out but listening.

Via the Townsville VHF repeater were

Ben/VK4YT, Kelso, North QLD, Australia

Spent Sunday with Jo, the pooches and the TARC Team at Bluewater as part of the Australia Day Long Week Family Radio Camp. Helped coral the crocs in Bluewater Creek and enjoyed the swimming. Spent Australia Day in the ceiling space at home running more power and networking cables plus installed a few more powerpoints in the new house. Spent Tuesday getting some cooling fans for the ute working - not playing the game due to some problems with the temperature sensor.

Lyndall/VK4ZM, Vincent, North QLD, Australia

Good evening all. Had a great 4 days at Bluewater. Was amazed at the sightings and capture of the two crocs in the creek. Was good swimming though, the creek got cooler during a couple of days. Flag Raising on Australia Day had to be cancelled due to the torrential rain which didn't let up until just before leaving time. Home again and there has been one equipment casualty, the 45 year old Sanyo microwave oven (which travelled from Sydney to Thursday Island to Townsville) has stopped working. While cooking on Monday evening it gave out a soft thud sound, then it just hummed. A new microwave oven has been installed though not sure the life of the new one will be as much as the old one.

Peter/VK4PQ, Kelso, North QLD, Australia

G'day all. 45 years an amazing amount of service to get out of a microwave oven!

Using medium power output tonight on the transceiver to get through the rocks on UHF up to the Mount Stuart repeater. It has been raining again and the frogs love it, Lake Kelso is well formed. During the rainy weather have been playing with a trial version of Ham Radio Deluxe interfaced to a Yaesu FT857 through a U5-Link CAT interface, it has only taken 2 weeks to get it all going. Also doing more development on AllStarLink ASL3and developing some more scripts to try out on the news transmissions.

The net controller informed all that the crocs have been named Snaggletooth and Spikeyletail and have been happily listening into the net gently wagging their tails.

The net concluded at 1020UTC after the ta ta round was completed and the Net Controller wished everyone a safe return for the February 2026 Net.

The next ARMN will be happening on Tuesday 24th February and then on Tuesday 24th March at 0930UTC on the Townsville UHF Voice Repeater incorporating the VK4TUB AllStarLink 46740 and Echolink 837219 nodes. Remember too that the Tech on the Air net will be happening on Tuesday 31st March from 0930UTC then on Tuesday 30th June on the Townsville VHF repeater incorporating the VK4PQ AllStarLink 49806 and Echolink 956580 nodes along with the VK4GDN AllStarLink 54043 145.145MHz Node.

73's Lyndall/VK4ZM

JOTA CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Richard/VK4PQV reported:

Jamboree On The Air will be held on the 3rd full weekend in October, Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th.

Flinders Region Girl Guides will be holding theirs at the BP Memorial Training Centre and Camp Grounds at Toolakea Beach Road Bluewater and they will need operators.

Kennedy Region Scouts will be holding a Region JOTA/JOTI camp at Camp Tamaroo Bluewater and they will need at least 4 operators

QSL CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Ashley/VK4FUU reported :

- Thanks to Laurie Pritchard at the WIA VK4 Inwards QSL Bureau, QSL Cards have been received for Troy/VK4DG, John/VK4FNQT, Lloyd/VK4FP, Bob/VK4KEE, Snow/VK4ME, Gary/VK4OO, Peter/VK4PQ, Ross/VK4RO, Kerry/VK4TUB, Wayne/VK4WDM and Jeff/VK4XA. Lloyd, Bob, Snow and Kerry have their cards - deliveries to the other operators are being arranged.

EDITOR BACKSCATTER REPORT:

- Gavin/VK4ZZ reported :

The February issue will close for articles on Friday afternoon 13th, be with Iain/VK4IGM by Monday 16th for the limited print run publishing at the Senator's office. Thanks for those who have submitted items – expecting another bumper issue this month!

TRANSMISSION OFFICER & CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

(our transmission officers are Richard/VK4FRJG, Lyndall/VK4ZM, Denis/VK4AE, Peter/VK4PQ, Gavin/VK4ZZ)

- Richard/VK4PQV reported:

For the month of December 2025 the WIA and Q-news transmissions and call-backs were done by Peter VK4PQ. NQ news retransmissions and call-backs were done by Richard VK4PQV. For January 2026 the WIA and Q-news transmissions and call-backs and the NQ news retransmissions and call-backs were done by Richard VK4PQV.

For the month of February 2026 the WIA and Q-news transmissions and call-backs will be done by Peter VK4PQ. NQ news retransmissions and call-backs will be done by Richard VK4PQV.

PUBLICATIONS CO-ORDINATOR REPORT:

- Iain/VK4IGM reported:

The limited print run of Back-scatter magazine is going well. Many thanks to Hon Susan McDonald, Senator for Queensland and the team at the Townsville Office. Without the Senator's and Staff's support the production of the limited run printed version of Back-scatter would be in jeopardy.

WIA CONTACT REPORT

Gavin/VK4ZZ reported:

- The WIA Election of Directors for the 2026 year is currently underway. WIA members will have received either via email or post directions on how to make the vote, with the deadline 28th February 2026.
- The WIA has entered into a commercially binding agreement with Ron Bertrand's radioelectronicschool to co-operatively provide Amateur Radio education and training services. Established in 1997 RES has been the gateway for many to receive the training necessary to attain an Australian Amateur Radio Licence and the agreement is designed to preserve RES with support from the WIA and affiliated clubs.
- The 2026 WIA John Moyle Memorial Field Day Contest new rules have been further revised with the latest rules, N1MM custom configuration file and upgraded Excel spreadsheet available for download from the WIA Website.
- The 2026 WIA AGM Weekend will be happening in conjunction with the Albury-Wodonga Radio Club VK-SUMMIT on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd May.

FACEBOOK MASTER REPORT:

- Paul/VK4ICA had no report for this month.

FINANCE OFFICERS REPORT:

- Bob/VK4AHH and Phil/VK4HSV will report at the 2026 AGM.

Motion 202602006 moved by Richard/VK4PQV to accept tabled Ex-Officio Reports and Seconded by Hairy Richard/VK4ZMB. - CARRIED unanimously.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Public Facing Facebook Page - Motion 202509008 follow up – Ron Ostrenski/VK4JBY has issued the following notice and motion

Subject: Failure to comply with approved motion.

Facebook page is not yet available for public viewing as voted by members last year.

I move a motion to nominate a second TARC facebook administrator. I nominate VK4TUB Kerry and VK4BT Ben.

Regards Ron Ostrenski VK4JBY

Gavin/VK4ZZ recounted a conversation he had with Kerry/VK4TUB regard the public facing/accessed Ham facebook page at one of the December 2025 Office sessions where Kerry

had advised that on the advise of Adrian/VK4TCA he put together the Ham Radio North Queensland facebook page administered by himself and Adrian plus a few others. Kerry asked that theTARCinc Facebook Master Paul/VK4ICA be advised that a club public facing/public access facebook page is no longer required. Gavin advised the meeting that with the Ham Radio North Queensland facebook page in place action on both motion 202509008 and the proposed motion by Ron/VK4JBY is no longer required and thanked Kerry/VK4TUB and Adrian/VK4TCA in establishing a new outlet for facebook participation and information for Amateur Radio in North Queensland

Thanks for Tech Net participation

Peter/VK4PQ thanked everyone for their participation in the New Years Eve Tech on the Air Net and was very appreciative for the great roll up.

Reports: 2025 TARC Christmas Party

Gavin/VK4ZZ : Heaps of thanks to Sharon and Snow/VK4ME for letting us to hold the party on the shores of Lake Herodes.

A great turnout for the party that happened on Sunday 14th December. 37 people were well catered for with the Monster Auction, a big feed-up for lunch and the fun Mystery Pressie Auction.

Og cooked up a heap of snossages and fried onion to feed all, Lyndall kept the salads coming and Teddy provided and served home-made cheesecakes for dessert. Sharon helped with some forgotten items to aid the food making and Snow provided the super-charged BBQ to cook everything up. Snow had a great time finding good homes for the quality monsters and getting our money out of us. A lot of the monsters were found to work well when they arrived at their new homes. Sharon was assisted by Kooka at the Mystery Pressie Auction with Phil providing superb scribing and delivery. Finally, thanks to everyone who came along and made it a great party – hope you had a great time and that some of your monsters or surprises turn out to be very handy. The date has already been set for the 2026 TARC Christmas Party – Sunday 13th December.

Reports: 2025 TARC Monster Xmas Lights Tour

Gavin/VK4ZZ : The weather was better than last years washout so the tour of Northern Beaches suburbs was held on Friday 19th December, gathering at the Coles Bushland Beach car park around 7pm. Participants included Jo and Ben/VK4YT with a dazzling mobile light display, Kay and Bob/VK4AAH, Peter/VK4PQ, Jan and Phil/VK4AAH, Bronwyn – kiddoes and former TARC president Peter/VK4PVH (jetting across the continent from VK6-land to be on the tour) plus Lyndall/VK4ZM and Gavin/VK4ZZ with a much smaller light display on the ElectroWagon. The tour headed through Bushland Beach (including the high hill), into the incomplete housing estate which had a heap of good displays, along into and winding through Mount Low (with some fantastic displays) then, due to time constraints the part of the tour through Jensen and Deeragun was truncated and the tour proceeded into Burdell, with the highlight of this part of the tour being the slow pass of the VK4KMA/VK4ICA QTH with Princess and Paul showing us all the light-up dinosaurs and pretty lights. The tour continued through other parts of Burdell ending at the North Shore Big Green Shed – which was closed 😞 Jan, Phil, Lyndall and Gavin had coffees at the nearby M place then headed for home. The 2026 Tour will be happening on Friday 18th December.

Reports: 2026 Australia Day Long Week Family Radio Camp

Gavin/VK4ZZ: Many thanks to Richard/VK4PQV for arranging the Flinders Guides Baden Powell Memorial Training Centre at Bluewater for this year's Radio Camp. Sheila/VK4PAL, Iain/VK4IGM, Richard/VK4PQV, Lyndall/VK4ZM and Gavin/VK4ZZ glamped luxuriously in the sleeping hut, Doris

and Wayne/VK4WSG glamped in the canvas mansion while the weather was dry and spent a night in the dormitory while day visitors were Dave and Dollar the mighty doggie from next door, Snow/VK4ME for a couple of mornings and collecting his QSL cards, Clyde/VK4FCRH and Chub/VK4FIBW, Jo & Ben/VK4YT visiting on Sunday with mighty mutts Fern and Courtney, Dr Lloyd/VK4FP who picked up his QSL cards. Some good swims were done in the recently flushed out Bluewater Creek which included some Maritime Portable radio operations by Ben and Gavin plus the sighting of a Croc! The Croc was exhausted and laid on the bank where the swimmers entered the creek. It wagged its tail feebly but stayed put. Another exhausted Croc swam downstream to the swimmers who guided it to its mate on the bank. Gavin named them Snaggletooth and Spike-tail and they are currently residing at the Borg Cube. They get happy and wag their tails when they hear stations on the Townsville Repeaters. They have mysterious markings stamped into their bellies, Men 9 Women 11. Antenna work during the camp included the erecting of the VK4PQV 80/40 Dipole which was used for the Gnarly Net, participation in the TREC and Central Highlands Nets plus the running of the North Queensland Net. Wayne/VK4WSG successfully adjusted and field deployed an End Fed Half Wave wire with unun. Gavin/VK4ZZ successfully made a 9:1 unun and deployed it along with 25.4m of wire in the field to make an End Fed Random Wire antenna. Some maintenance was done for the Centre including fixing a down pipe on the Big Hut and re-stringing the Big Hut clothes line. Serious bouts of Extreme Loafing also took place and Gavin managed to break his laptop in the field, having to then rely on the old and trusty XP laptop that had recently been updated with the help of the Legacy Update website.

The 2027 Australia Day Long Week Family Radio Camp is currently scheduled to happen at the Flinders Guides Baden Powell Memorial Training Centre Bluewater from Saturday Morning 23rd to Tuesday afternoon 27th January.

Reports: 2025 Defence Welcome to Townsville Expo Display

Iain/VK4IGM: Thanked everyone who helped setup and ran this year's display on Saturday 31st January at Townsville Stadium. Lots of stuff was displayed and we increased the recognition of the club and Amateur Radio to all the visiting Defence members and families, the other community groups that were displaying on the day, local officials and politicians.

WIA John Moyle Memorial Field Day Weekend

Gavin/VK4ZZ: Happening at the Mount Fox Camp Grounds from Friday 20th to Sunday 22nd March. The campsite features: Huge grassy open space next to a lagoon (part of Michael Creek) that has abundant bird life plus very tall trees, topography ideal for vertical radiators and tree supported wires. Basic toilets, refurbished showers and a covered camp kitchen. It is dog friendly area, has no mains power and a view of the nearby extinct volcano called Mount Fox. Accessible to motorbikes, RVs, camper trailers and caravans. Mobile Phone coverage is by the Telstra 4G low capacity base in Oak Hills Road, approx. 2km from the campsite. \$10 donation per night per vehicle to the local chapter of the Rural Fire Service whose members also maintain the facility in pristine condition. The new rules for the contest will be published in February Back-scatter and are also available, along with the N1MM custom configuration file and an updated Excel Spreadsheet on the WIA web site.

Senate Enquiry into Communications Failures during the 2025 Floods

Iain/VK4IGM: Informed the meeting that the Australian Senate will be holding an enquiry into the communications failures experienced during the 2025 flooding event in Central, North and Far North Queensland. The enquiry will include our Senator for North Queensland, Hon Susan McDonald and her office is currently asking for written submissions regarding experiences

and solutions to be tendered to her office. Iain/VK4IGM and Gavin/VK4ZZ were asked by the Senator during their last visit to the office to spread awareness about the planned enquiry into the technical community. As part of his submission Iain is going to suggest that during disasters a 3 minute time limit be put on all connections through mobile phone sites and powered optical fibre repeaters to preserve backup battery power which currently only lasts around 4 hours with no mains supply.

FURTHER GENERAL BUSINESS: Nil.

There being no further business, the President Snow/VK4ME closed the meeting at 2149h local time and wished everyone goodnight and a safe return to the next Monthly Management Meeting on the 3rd of March 2025.

Minutes Transcribed 14th February 2025 by Gavin Reibelt VK4ZZ - Secretary 2026, The Townsville Amateur Radio Club (Inc).



**JOIN THE WIA TODAY !
SUPPORT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
LOBBYING FOR THE HOBBY.
SUPPORT EMCOM SERVICES. RECEIVE**

**AMATEUR RADIO MAGAZINE. UTILISE THE QSL BUREAU.
MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR THE HOBBY !
<http://www.wia.org.au> FOR MORE INFO**

Solar Panels !

Hairy Richard/VK4ZMB has these gorgeous Solar Panels ready to fly into your shack power system. Local pickup in Townsville only.

12 by 1650 x 994 x 36 Pmax 250W Trini

TSM-250PC05A bare aluminium

1.6401 m² = 15% Voc 38.0V Vmpp 30.3V

Isc 8.8 A Imp 8.3 A

All \$20 each. Contact Hairy on rsstone@gmail.com

Rare 27MHz Transceivers for Sale

Very active 27MHz CB Operator Dave Jenkins recently went Silent Key in Ayr, North Queensland. His daughter Kylie would like to sell to good homes the following 27MHz CB Transceivers, with pick-up from Ayr.

- Pearce Simpson President tabletop base AM/SSB 27MHz Transceiver

- Wagner 510 tabletop base AM/SSB 27MHz Transceiver
For more information or to seal the deal, text - yes text Kylie on 0408 617223. Pick up only from Ayr by prior arrangement.

HF Station for Sale

Ken/VK4HAI is reluctantly selling his seldom used HF Station which consists of - ICOM IC-718 HF Transceiver with Microphone & DC Lead plus Regulated Linear 13.8V 30A Power Supply and Extension Speaker, Everything is in near new order - as stated seldom used and kept well packed. Ken is asking \$2000 with pick-up available at the home QTH in Atherton Far North Queensland.

Ring Ken now on 0407 502838 to seal the deal.

PERSONAL CELEBRATIONS : Birthdays :

13 Feb Tex, YM of Lyn 4EI
 15 Feb Gary 4CUZ
 18 Feb Tom 4KS
 22 Feb Rob 4TW, YM of Tracey
 3 Mar Philip 4HSV, YM of Jan
 4 Mar Lawrie 4LE
 5 Mar Peter Renton
 5 Mar Clive 4ACC, YM of Kay
 9 Mar Peter 4PQ, YM of Ruth
 9 Mar Dave 4UN, YM of Sylvia
 10 Mar Philip 4API (Krystal Electronics)
 15 Mar Ray 4OIL, YM of Wendy
 18 Mar Ian 4ZT
 19 Mar John 4OB
 20 Mar Anthony, harmonic of Peter 4PVH
 22 Mar Pat 4MUY
 23 Mar Don 4MC, YM of Teri 4HYL
 26 Mar Roger 4CD
 26 Mar David 4DJC
 27 Mar Ken 4HAI, YM of Kristyl
 27 Mar Roslyn, board of control of MATMAN 4GUN
 28 Mar Mike 4BFO
 28 Mar Tony 4TJS
 28 Mar Willy 4HB, YM of Rosalind
 1 Apr Nell, board of control of Vern 4FVC
 2 Apr Greg, harmonic of Vern 4FVC and Nell
 3 Apr Derek, harmonic of Richard 4PQV
 4 Apr Sharon, board of control of Jeff 4XA
 5 Apr Zane, harmonic of Leigh 4HLW and Wendy
 9 Apr Andrew, harmonic of Vern 4FVC and Nell
 10 Apr Kimberley – harmonic of Teri 4HYL & Don 4MC
 15 Apr Gavin, 4ZZ (og!), YM of Lyndall 4ZM
 18 Apr Joan, board of control of Colin 4UCM
 18 Apr Colin 4MCC
 19 Apr Renee, harmonic of Richard 4PQV
 23 Apr Natasha, flight crew of Lyndall 4ZM & Og 4ZZ
 23 Apr Mark 3TCD, YM of Angela
 25 Apr Dave 4WR, YM of Karen
 27 Apr Trent 4LKG, YM of Janie
 28 Apr Bill, 4WGU



: Wedding Anniversaries :

14 Mar Wendy & Ray 4OIL.
 30 Mar Nell & Vernon 4FVC.
 5 Apr Kerry & Mick 4CMW
 6 Apr Bev & Rossco 4AQ.
 10 Apr Jennyvi & Jason 4OT.
 26 May Susan & Ray 4LU.

: Some Curly Wind Anniversaries :

25 Dec 2010 TC Tasha Cat 1 landfall Gordonvale
 12 Jan 2009 TC Charlotte Cat 1 Gilbert River Mouth
 30 Jan 2010 TC Olga Cat 1 landfall near Karumba
 30 Jan 2011 TC Anthony Cat 2 landfall Bowen
 3 Feb 2011 TC Yasi Cat 5 landfall Mission Beach
 11 Feb 1999 TC Rona Cat 2 landfall Daintree Rvr
 27 Feb 2000 TC Steve Cat 2 landfall Ellis Beach
 20 Mar 2006 TC Larry Cat 5 landfall Innisfail-Babinda
 20 Mar 2012 Townsville Twister EF2 Tornado
 21 Mar 2010 TC Ului Cat 3 landfall near Airlie Beach
 28 Mar 2017 TC Debbie Cat 4 landfall near Airlie Beach
 3 Apr 2000 TC Tessi Cat 2 landfall Bambaroo-Mutarnee
 19 Apr 2006 TC Monica Cat 3 landfall near Lockhart Rvr

for more reading and info surf to -
Bureau of Meteorology – Cyclone History

<http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/tropical-cyclone-knowledge-centre/history/>



Make an offer for this Tower and Antenna combo

The following is offered from a deceased estate and is being administered by John/VK4FNQ.

Approx 40foot 4 post tower with rotator and the following antennas -

- 5 element 6metre yagi
- 10 element 2metre yagi
- 17 element 70centimetre yagi
- 5 element 2metre vertical yagi
- 80metre inverted V dipole

The successful purchaser will remove the tower and equipment which is located in the Charters Towers area. The combination will not be split - it is a package deal. A very good local Franna crane operator is available and is reasonably priced.

Contact John/VK4FNQ on 0409 631624 to make the deal or find out more.

VISUAL BACKSLATTER



FRANK ELRIDGE

TOWNSVILLE TRAIN PARK PRESIDENT



Seen on TV recently – Brett/VK4BDE
wearing one of his many community hats.
A pity Network 7 got his name wrong 😊

TARC does the John Moyle Field Day 2026

theTARCinc will be participating in the WIA John Moyle Memorial Field Day weekend from Friday afternoon 20th to Sunday afternoon 22nd March at the Mount Fox Campgrounds, 2944 Mount Fox Rd, Mount Fox QLD 4850.

Location 18.817485°S 145.794824°E Maidenhead Grid QH21VE53JT Elevation 630metres

To Ingham CBD Direct 42.3km 064°T by road 63.1km approx.

1hour To VK4RAT Mt Stuart Direct 119.3km 119°T

To Deeragun Lights by road 159km approx. 2hours 5minutes

Portable operation is the go so make sure you bring plenty of batteries and whisper quiet generators if you can.



The campsite features: Huge grassy open space next to a lagoon (part of Michael Creek) that has abundant bird life plus very tall trees, topography ideal for vertical radiators and tree supported wires. Basic toilets, cold shower and a covered camp kitchen. Dog friendly area, no mains power, a view of the nearby extinct volcano called Mount Fox.

Accessible to motorbikes, RVs, camper trailers and caravans. Mobile Phone coverage is by the Telstra 4G low capacity base in Oak Hills Road, approx 2km from the campsite.

\$10 donation per night per vehicle to the local chapter of the Rural Fire Service whose members also maintain the facility in pristine condition.

Accessing the campsite via road: From the Deeragun traffic lights drive on the Bruce Highway for 95.6km to the Lannercost Street lights at Ingham. Do your final shopping and fuelling up in Ingham before travelling on.

Left turn onto Lannercost Street, proceed 8km along Abergowrie Road to Trebonne. Left turn onto Stone River Road, proceed 18.9km and right turn near Upper Stone to stay on Stone River Road. Proceed 6.7km then Right turn onto Mount Fox Road. Proceed up Seaview Range for 28.8km then turn right into the campgrounds. Ensure while you travel up and down the range to maintain a radio watch on UHF-CB CH40 and travel with caution as there are many bends, steep climbs and descents and narrow points on Mount Fox Road. There are call points along the road at the most hazardous locations and it is highly recommended that you call at the call-points to ensure other vehicles know you are on the road.

Equipping for success: Logging for the event will be done by a dude that can type using a 12V powered netbook running the last version of VKCL, there will be lots of antennae lofting and tweaking, operating on HF, VHF & UHF in a location that can be used what ever weather is happening plus plenty of chances to kick back and socialise.

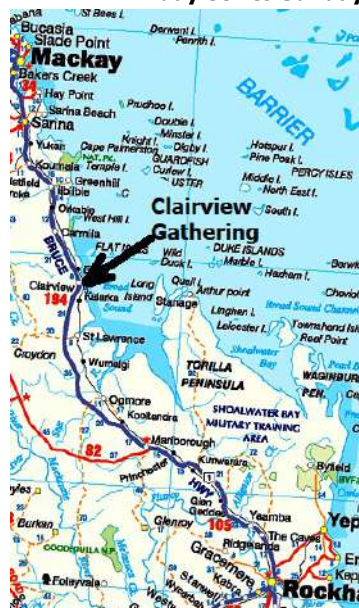
Some essentials to bring: Food, Drink, condiments, toilet paper (donate some extra rolls), washing up gear, portable shelters, comfy chairs and beds, portable lighting - plus your radios, batteries, generators & fuel, antennas and the height acquisition kit. Hope to see you there - come rain or shine !

JMFD Rules and information available on the WIA National Website - look under the members section at Contests.

So far tagging along are

VK4s ME, ZM, ZZ, ZWC, TUB and Teddy, YT and Jo,

Clairview Gathering Friday 8th to Sunday 10th May 2026



The Clairview Gathering is a yearly event where Radio Amateurs meet at a spot on the coast between Rockhampton and Mackay to relax, talk radio, re-establish acquaintances and participate in the world renown Saturday Night Mega-Auction. There will definitely be RAFFLES and the famous Lucky Numbers Board!

There is a rumour going about that George VK4HAN might be getting a hair-cut yet again.

The Gathering is one of the main revenue raisers

for the Mackay Amateur Radio Association Inc. and the Rockhampton and District Amateur Radio Club Inc.

It happens in 2026 on the weekend following the Long Weekend from Friday afternoon 8th to Monday morn 11th May, with most events happening on Saturday 9th May.

Those who are keen to chill out completely in one of the most relaxing and laid back venues in the cosmos arrive earlier and stay later. The Clairview Gathering is so popular that on-site accommodation is close to being booked out already, so if you want to go you will have to very quick. Likewise the nice camp, caravan or motor-home sites will book out quickly.

To book your camping spot contact the BarraCrab Caravan

Park Clairview <http://www.barracrabcp.com.au/>

or on 07 49560190



The Tech on The Air net December 2025 report

Hi everyone, here is a quick rundown of the latest Tech on The Air net December 2025, New Year's Eve edition, by Peter VK4PQ in Kelso.

The night started out at 7:30pm local Townsville time with the running of the latest NZART news from New Zealand and it was quite an informative news cast, not only with local New Zealand updates but some international news thrown in. Thanks go to the NZART news team and Jim ZL2BHF for providing the audio file to me for retransmission.

After the news I called for stations wishing to check in; and these stations called in, VK1JT(A), VK4YT (A), VK2DY(E), VK4JBY(E), VK4PQV, VK4WSG, VK4ZZ, VK4KEE, VK4AAH and VK4ME. Great rollop and thanks to all that came along on the night. - (E) Echolink, (A) Allstar

We had two questions with notice, we started out with Wayne's VK4WSG, Wayne asked:

Hi, I am refurbishing a vertical antenna and trying to decide which is the best material for an extension, Aluminium or Stainless Steel, the bulk of the antenna is Aluminium. This antenna uses the mad dog coil as a base and has aluminium tubing for the main element with radials at the base.

VK1JT was the first callsign, offering advice on galvanic reaction between two dissimilar metals and suggested that aluminium be the best option and use alminox conductive paste on the joint to give a good electrical joint for years to come.

Other members of the group had similar advice, the antenna and its characteristics were talked about for a while and Wayne added, this was stage one, stage two is to redesign the vertical using a Snowdog coil, thanks everyone for that.

The second question of the evening was a question with notice from Mark VK4TSV, Mark writes;

If it is not too late I have a question as I am rebuilding my Di Poles.

Q Should I drop the coax LL400 straight down vertically into the radio RX/TX area. Do you lose any efficiency if I loop is at the top before the Balun and then strap it to the pole down to the Radio.

The height is around 13 meters, total length of the coax LL400 is 25 meters

I had a bit of fun researching this one we had some comments from the group as well thanks to those stations, co-pilot has summarised those comments and a little more see below.

Short answer: You won't lose any meaningful efficiency either way, as long as you respect bend radius and don't make silly-tight loops.

Let's unpack it a bit.

1. Loss in 25 m of LMR-400 at 13 m height

Assuming LL400 $\approx$ LMR-400:

Typical loss at 144 MHz: about 0.07 dB/m

So for 25 m:

$25 \times 0.07 = 1.75$ dB

Adding a small loop (say extra 0.5–1 m):

$[1 \times 0.07 = 0.07 \text{ dB}]$

That's completely negligible in practice.

So whether you go straight down or add a loop near the top, the *extra length* doesn't matter in any real way.

2. Looping vs straight drop

You've basically got two geometries:

Straight down from the antenna/balun to the radio area

Small loop at the top, then down the pole, strapped

From a pure RF loss point of view, both are fine. The real issues are mechanical and EMC/RFI related.

Mechanical benefits of a loop near the top:

Strain relief:

A gentle loop right below the antenna/balun relieves mechanical stress on the connector/so239/N-type. If something gets tugged, the loop flexes instead of the connector taking it all.

Drip loop for water:

A loop means water runs to the lowest part and drips off, rather than running straight into a connector or into a junction box.

Flex for wind movement:

The loop allows some movement, so the coax isn't constantly flexed right at the connector by wind-induced motion of the mast/antenna.

All of that is "free" since RF loss is basically unchanged.

3. Things to watch out for

If you *do* loop it, just mind these:

Minimum bend radius:

For LMR-400-type coax, aim for a bend radius of at least about 10 $\times$ the cable diameter for "permanent" bends.

Cable diameter is roughly 10 mm, so minimum radius $\approx$ 100 mm (10 cm).

In practice, a loop of 20–30 cm radius (40–60 cm diameter) is comfortable and kind to the cable.

No sharp kinks:

Avoid any tight cable ties that "pinch" the coax. Use UV-rated ties or Velcro, not so tight that the jacket deforms.

Secure but not rigid:

Strap to the pole every $\sim$ 0.5–1 m, with a tiny bit of slack so vibration doesn't get transmitted straight through.

4. Balun location and common-mode thoughts

You mentioned "before the Balun" (balun):

Balun/choke should be as close to the antenna feedpoint as practical. That's more about pattern and keeping RF off the outside of the coax than efficiency.

A **small physical loop** in the coax is not the same as a

coax choke (unless you deliberately do a coil with specific turns and spacing). Don't rely on a casual loop as RF choking; if common-mode is a concern, use ferrites or a proper choke.

5. Practical recommendation

Given your 13 m mast and 25 m run:

Yes, make a gentle loop just below the antenna/balun, then strap the coax down the pole to the radio.

Keep the loop large (20–30 cm radius) and clean, then secure the vertical run neatly.

From an RF efficiency perspective, the difference to a straight drop is effectively zero; mechanically, the loop is a net win.

The above transcript was written by co-pilot a windows AI assistant and vetted by P Harrex VK4PQ.

A couple of good points from Gavin VK4ZZ, with respect to coaxial runs, when running cable from a dipole to the shack for example, run the coax at 90° to the dipole feedpoint for a bit before turning the coax run to the shack and the multiple of a quarter wave for the length of coaxial when running to the shack is more relevant when connecting an unbalanced antenna whereby the coax may be forming part of the antenna, and is not as relevant when connecting to a balanced antenna such as a dipole.

We also had a quick discussion on multi stranded stainless steel wire and its uses in amateur radio, antennas and coils for example. Join us next time for a little more on this topic. Well that brought the net to a conclusion but before closing we threw it around the stations still connected and wished everyone a HAPPY NEW YEAR, everyone was asked to listen out for Gavin VK4ZZ and his talking clock just before midnight and listen to the countdown to the new year, a few of us made it, thanks Gavin.

It was a great night and thanks to all for coming along, next Tech Net will be the 20-Jan-2026, if you can make it bring a friend along too it's a great night, 73 Everyone.

DE VK4PQ Peter @ Kelso

VISUAL BACKSLATTER



On a recent tour of the antipodes, Gareth/VK4GED discovered Ogmore but, alas Og was not there 😊

The Story and Journey of the VK4TSV Towers.

Part 1

I will try and do a brief about the antenna poles, a 30 year project with life and Murphy slowing it down, at least life is continuing sooooo far.



A few photos of the left 13 meter support pole, there is a left pole, centre tri pole, right end is support from a tie off which is the upper roof 2nd story from the house roof next door (friendly neighbour) that gives me 25 meters in each direction from the centre tri tower, the end towers have lowering nylon rope, centre tower is hinged at 1 meter above the ground, the Balun can be lowered from this tri tower the same way for the 3 to 30 MHz BushCom travelling wave Dipole.



All three poles have 2 x lowering facilities to allow for an option Dipole, balanced, and I hope it will manage 1kW

Part 2 tri tower

Centre tower/pole, there are 3 tie off points, left tower, this tri tower and the 2nd story roof edge from my neighbours roof, the tri tower is virtually in the middle of a 50 mtr spacing, The antenna is a BushCom 3/30MHz travelling wave dipole.



The 2nd pole at back is the winch pully rope guide, an X street light pole tower with a 2 meter ext to get the pully rope above half way up the tri tower so it is a bit more balanced when upping and downing , but this needs to be re adjusted and lifted 50 cm and I have a new 70 mtr black nylon rope to replace this grey one to make it all look a lot more tidy but all of this needs to happen at the same time I put on a vertical 10/6 mtr, 2 new 2 and 70 cm, a scanner and UHF antennas at the same time of the wife will cut it all down, there is also an earth stake there and good earth run 10 metres away to my 6 meter deep well, well that is another story !



Part 3

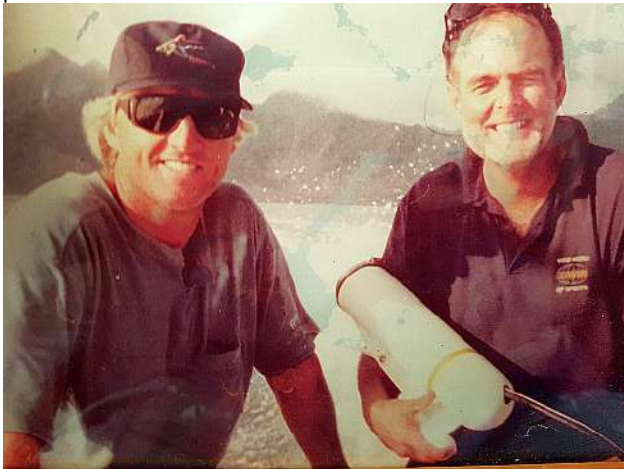
Many years ago some one had a tower for sale around the area of mt low, I think 90,s

At the same time I purchased a Yaesu FT101ZD which I still have but never used because now the VFO is stuck



I thought I was going to get into the wonderful world of Ham radio not really knowing much about it apart from the desire which has all ways been very strong, at 17 yoa I have a Yaesu receiver but as one gets into his teens other attractions come into place, and it was not a crystal set, it had two legs and I had just started work as a Panel Radio operator for a radio station in Hobart - 7HT.

Being in the media on many levels for 60 years has been full on and being involved with many support originations and running a film and video production units and life in general just cut me out of anything else, so it is now my time, well almost to get my show on the road with you guys giving a hand here and there plzzzz.



The Tri tower section sits on a 1 meter tilt base, from the base of the tower to the top is 6 meters.

I have placed a 6 meter 50 mm pipe inside the tower at 3 meters, inserted on top of the 50 mm inner tube at the 6 mtr mark is a 65 mm alloy tube taking the tower to 12 meters or 13 meters if u add the base, inside at the top of 13 mtrs is a 50 mm x 3 mtr tube to attach the pulley's etc and secure other antennas and extra Dipole support if I go that way, all tubes are on Yaesu rotator 50mm and 65 mm guides so if I want to in the future rotate it.



The tri tower pard is bolted to the 1 mtr high support base and guide off be 4 x 800 kg guy wire tie offs, the top at 13 meters also has guy wires, all tie off points at the eyelets on drop bolts into cement, the same with the winch pole, bolted to the

foundation and 3 guys wired off at the back to carry the weight of the tri tower when upped and lowered.



73 de Mark/VK4TSV

A new test set in the VK4WIT shack



Thanks to Kerry/VK4TUB – this donated Ramsay COM3 telecommunications test set is now installed in the VK4WIT Club Shack to aid in fault-finding and repair of radio equipment.

VISUAL BACKSLATTER



at the World's Toughest Off-Road Racing event held at the NQORA Millchester facility TARCadian Kevvy Screen managed to get his buggy a bit muddy during the look lap



At the 50's Rock and Roll NYE Party, Dr. Lloyd/VK4FP and dance partner

JOHN MOYLE FIELD DAY CONTEST 2026

(sourced from the Contest section of the WIA Website)

V2 rules presented by Dianne Main/VK4DI and Alan Shannon/VK4SN

Contest Introduction

The Field Day is held over the 3rd full weekend in March and run from UTC 0100 on the Saturday to 0059 on the Sunday and is open to all amateurs.

Aim Of the Contest

The aim is to encourage and provide familiarisation with portable and field operation and provide training for emergency situations. The rules are therefore specifically designed and focused to encourage maximum participation.

Objective

All stations are welcome to participate, but DX stations can only claim points for contacts with VK, ZL and P2 stations. All VK, ZL and P2 stations can claim points for all contacts, with any station in the world, if valid serial numbers are exchanged.

Date and Time

- 3rd full weekend in March
- 0100UTC Saturday to 0059UTC Sunday (24 hours)

Categories

1. Separate HF and VHF and above categories as below.
 2. Enter one log with all HF and VHF+ contacts. vklogchecker (log submission site) will pull out the separate categories when the log is submitted and enter you in both HF and VHF and above entries if they exist, as per the categories below.
 - a. Single Op portable 6 hour
 - b. Single Op portable 24 hour
 - c. Multi-One Portable 6 hour
 - d. Multi-One portable 24 hour
 - e. Multi-Multi Portable 6 hour
 - f. Multi-Multi portable 24 hour
 - g. Single Op Home 6 hour
 - h. Single Op Home 24 hour
 - i. Multi-One Home 24 hour
 - j. Multi-Multi Home 24 hour
- An overlay of YOUTH (Single Op, 25 years and younger) is accepted for any of the above categories.

Modes

- Phone (SSB AM FM)
- CW
- Mixed (both Phone and CW modes)

Time Blocks: Contest is divided into eight consecutive three-hour blocks starting at 0100UTC.

Re-working: A station can be worked once per band per mode per block.

Bands: 160, 80, 40, 20, 15, and 10 meters on HF and 50MHz to 241Ghz on VHF/UHF/SHF. (no WARC bands in accordance with IARU regulations)

Exchange

- Single OP - Serial Number starting at 001 then consecutively across all bands.
- Multi OP - Serial numbers starting at 001 on each band.

Multiplier

- Each new prefix from VK, P2, and ZL stations count as a multiplier credit once per band per mode per block. VK4, VL4, VJ4, ZL1, and ZM1 are examples of new prefixes when first logged.

Power

- All entrants are to operate with power not to exceed their licence conditions for the mode and band of operation.

Scoring

- Portable and home stations: Phone - 1 point, CW - 2 points.
- Total score: Add up the Multipliers for each block and multiply by the total points.
- DX stations can only claim points for contacts with VK, ZL and P2 stations.

Logging

- N1MM logger+ using User Defined Contest (UDC) WIA-JMMFD.udc
- New Cabrillo Spreadsheet log allows copying and pasting to vklogchecker.com

Log Submission

- Logs must be submitted within 14 days to vklogchecker.com

- Only Cabrillo Ver3 logs or the new Excel Cabrillo spreadsheet format is allowed.

- Upload Cabrillo Ver3 logs or copy and paste the final spreadsheet log to vklogchecker dot com.
- Or send Spreadsheet or Cabrillo log to the manager if all else fails.

Awards

- Certificates will be provided as a downloadable PDF from the WIA website.
- The President's Shield, a perpetual trophy held at Andersson House, will be awarded to the portable Australian Club station, with the highest score. For this contest "Club Station" means a club affiliated with the WIA. The winning club will receive an individually inscribed wall plaque as permanent recognition.

Results

- Results will be released within a fortnight from end of log submission.

Station Definitions

Portable Station - A portable station comprises field equipment operating from a power source, e.g. batteries, portable generator, solar power, wind power, independent of any permanent facilities, and which is not the normal location of any amateur station.

Single Operator - A single operator station is where one person performs all operating, logging, and spotting functions. One signal on air only.

Multi-One Station - One transmitter with two or more operators. One signal on air only.

Multi-Multi Operator Stations (Includes Multi-Two) - A multi-operator station is where two or more transmitters are used and where two or more operators run the station. One signal per band only.

General Rules

- Phone includes SSB, AM, and FM. A station can only be worked in one phone mode per band per block.
- None of the portable field equipment may be erected on the site earlier than 28 hours before the beginning of the contest.
- Mains power operation of a portable station is expressly forbidden. If a station goes portable and uses mains power, then the station becomes a 'fixed' home station.
- All equipment comprising the portable station must be located within an 800m diameter circle.
- Portable logging: DO NOT use the /p after the serial number as done in the past or your entry will be denied. - The Cabrillo header will contain "PORTABLE" when the log is submitted.
- Operators can only use one callsign during the contest.
- Persons who participate in a Multi station cannot submit a log under their personal callsign.
- Scheduling a contact may only be done using radios and frequencies in use with the contest.
- Simplex operation only. Contacts are not valid via repeaters, satellites or the internet.
- Rule violations and/or missing or incorrect information in a log may result in the log being classified as a Checklog and will not be valid for points or awards.
- WIA General rules apply unless varied in this document.
- Contest Champion points are allocated to both HF and VHF and above sections.

- a. Single Op portable 6 hour
 - b. Single Op portable 24 hour
 - c. Multi-One Portable 6 hour
 - d. Multi-One portable 24 hour
 - e. Multi-Multi Portable 6 hour
 - f. Multi-Multi portable 24 hour
 - g. Single Op Home 6 hour
 - h. Single Op Home 24 hour
 - i. Multi-One Home 24 hour
 - j. Multi-Multi Home 24 hour
- Blocks 0100 to 0400, 0400 to 0700, 0700 to 1000, 1000 to 1300, 1300 to 1600, 1600 to 1900, 1900 to 2200, 2200 to 0100UTC

Sample Cabrillo Log
 START-OF-LOG 3.0:
 LOCATION: DX
 CALLSIGN: VK4Z
 CLUB: VKCC
 CONTEST: WIA-JMMFD
 CATEGORY-OPERATOR: SINGLE-OP
 CATEGORY-ASSISTED: NON-ASSISTED
 CATEGORY-BAND: ALL
 CATEGORY-MODE: MIXED
 CATEGORY-POWER: HIGH
 CATEGORY-STATION: FIXED
 CATEGORY-TRANSMITTER: ONE
 CATEGORY-OVERLAY: YOUTH
 CLAIMED-SCORE: 14
 OPERATORS: VK4ME
 NAME: ME
 ADDRESS: 123 MYSTREET RD
 ADDRESS-CITY: SOMEWHERE
 ADDRESS-STATE-PROVINCE: QLD
 ADDRESS-POSTALCODE: 4999
 ADDRESS-COUNTRY: AUSTRALIA
 GRID-LOCATOR: QG62aa
 EMAIL: me@email.aa
 CREATED-BY: VK4Z
 SOAPBOX: SAMPLE CABRILLO
 SOAPBOX: Cabrillo is just a text file laid out in a certain way
 X-COMMENT: FREQ MODE DATE TIME MYCALL TX RST
 TXEXCH RXCALL RXRST RXEXCH
 QSO: 7000 CW 2025-11-1 1 VK4Z 59 1 VK4XYZ 59 1
 QSO: 7000 PH 2025-11-1 2 VK4Z 59 2 VK4XYZ 59 2
 QSO: 3500 PH 2025-11-1 100 VK4Z 59 3 VK1ABC 59 1
 QSO: 3500 CW 2025-11-1 1100 VK4Z 59 4 VK2ABC 59 3
 QSO: 3500 CW 2025-11-1 1102 VK4Z 59 5 VK6ABC 59 2
 END-OF-LOG:
 (Note: the X-COMMENT line is not required but is here to show the column headings.)



Look for the call-points on your way along Mount Fox Road – listen and call on UHF-CB CH40 when heading up or down the range for the VK4WIT JMMFD portable activation.



Mount Fox Camp Ground – tall trees, camp shelter



Come along and watch Snow/VK4ME catch a tree



Ben/VK4YT can't wait to get back there!



Come along and meet the Mayor of Mount Fox, like these lucky hams did in 2025



Having a hot shower on site requires a little bit of hard yakka



Verticals, wires, dipoles, experimentals – perfect for field testing your antennas



remember to bring cash to pay your camp fees and support the Mt Fox Rural Fires

VK4WIT at Mount Fox Campgrounds,
 2944 Mount Fox Rd, Mount Fox QLD 4850.
 Location 18.817485°S 145.794824°E
 Maidenhead Grid QH21VE53JT
 Elevation 630metres



AM & CW on ANZAC Day - Saturday 25th April 2026.

Welcome and Best Wishes to all TARCadians, Families and Friends for the year ahead, 2026. Following our very successful achievements over the past few years, I intend to once again request permission from the responsible State Government Department to allow us to activate (on AM) from our 'WW2 Bomb Site - Oonoonba' on ANZAC Day, Saturday 25th April 2026.

I will also request similar permission to activate the Site on the Anniversary date of the bombing of Townsville (29th July 1942) which will be the Wednesday 29th July 2026 the 84th anniversary of War on Townsville.

It is important that the public of Townsville remain focused on our Historical Site, to keep it before the eyes and ears of Government Departments, Politicians and Council to ensure that this WW2 treasure of Townsville History is not built over by current and future developers and lost forever.

I am extremely thankful and proud of the support given by the TARCinc and Members who have given their time and commitment to this very worthwhile cause.

In addition, by attending the Bomb Site on ANZAC Day it opens up a wonderful opportunity for our attendees to set up and test all of their new style antennas which seem to be the latest fashion in HF, quick set up, portable systems, (myself included) on the AM mode of operation.

Timing, road map to the Bomb Site, working frequencies. etc. will be set out in the coming March edition of 'Backscatter'.

Cheers and 73's to all. LEST WE FORGET.

Ray- VK4OIL. Co-ordinator Save the WW2 Bomb Site - Oonoonba Townsville.

Packet Radio Lives!

Longed for the AX25 modulation sounds in your radio shack? Need a fix of a bulletin list? Well you can still have a Packet fix either by radio or via telnet.

The VK4OT-3 FBBS Heatley NQLD is accessible 24 hours a day either via the radio port on 145.175MHz or via Telnet on vk4ot.ddns.net port 6300.

Winlink Radio Message Servers Operational

subtract 1.5kHz for the dial frequency on HF.

VK4DJC - Located in Mount Morgan in Central Queensland operating 24 hours per day 7 days a week using VARA mode and Public Access enabled on the following spot frequencies, using USB on HF, FM on VHF. 7052kHz, 10146.5kHz, 14112.5kHz 28101.5kHz 144675kHz

VK4GED - Located at Laguna Quays in Central Queensland operating 24 hours per day 7 days a week using VARA VARA2750 and Public Access enabled on 7052kHz and on request 3569.5 10146.5 14112.5 28101.5kHz

VK4UI - Located at Rockhampton in Central Queensland operating 24 hours per day 7 days a week using VARA and VARA2750 Hybrid modes and Public Access enabled on 7058.5kHz, 10146.8kHz, 14111.0kHz

WinLink RMS also feature online login through the WinLink applications.

A M A N D C W D A Y
A N Z A C D A Y



AM and CW on ANZAC Day - Radioamateurs Remember. 25th April 2026

The AM and CW on Anzac Day event come about after a conversation between Lionel Veale ex Sgt Coast-watcher during WW2 and Mike Patterson VK4MIK - Mike served in the RAN for 21years. Lionel used radios to transmit coded intelligence by CW mode.

Mike thought it would be a good way for Amateurs to salute those who served or are still serving by using the old radio modes of AM and CW on Anzac Day and if possible at ex Defence sites.

This event has operated for well over 18 years and has proved very successful as many discovered AM mode and used it for the first time and others used home brew CW rigs.

In Queensland the Townsville Amateur Radio Club Inc. operates as Net Control using callsign AX4ATV from their Club Rooms, an ex WW2 Command Bunker (Project 81). The net operates on 7125 kHz AM all day with many using old radios. It also commences on the Gnarly Net from 0600 on 3599kHz CW then to AM on 3600kHz AM. Stations across Australia operate on this day and it's not a contest but simply make contact using old modes. New Zealand AM radio group have also expressed interest after contacts last year so listen out for our ANZAC partners.

Thanks to the organising and planning by Ray/AX4OIL, some other TARCadians led by Snow/AX4ME will again activating the historic World War 2 Oonoonba Bombing Site running portable stations on Amplitude Modulation and highlighting the need for the site to be preserved by the Queensland Government as an important commemoration site for community use.

Many Amateurs joined our Defence forces and took their skills into their service lives in a wide range of activities such as Coastwatchers, Air Force Radio operators, Radar operators and repair, navy radio operators and Army operations.

Over the weekend 25th & 26th April the 9th AMRO event will happen - Australian Military Radio Operators and their converted Military Radios will be on the air. More details will be released closer to the event, including this year's operational theme.

LEST WE FORGET

de VK4MIK Mike ex RAN - vk4mike@yahoo.com.au

Radio happenings Feb to Dec 2026 ... so far**February**

- Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 24th January - from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

March

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 3rd March from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 10th March from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 17th March from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC does the John Moyle Memorial Field Day March 20 21 22 - Mount Fox Camp Ground
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 24th March from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - Tech On The Air Net Tue 31st March from 7-30pm on Tsvl VHF Repeater and VK4PQ AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

April

- B2B Blue Hills Bash Easter Horse Endurance Rides - Bluewater Park Thur 2 April to Mon 6 April
 - TARC Management Meeting - Tue 7th April from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 14th April from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - NQORA Markwell Gold City 450 QLD Championship round Off Road Racing - Sat 18 April to Sun 19 April - Millchester MSRC
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 21st April from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - AM & CW on ANZAC Day - Sat 25th April
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 28th April from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

May

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 5th May from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - MARA/RADAR Clairview Gathering - Fri 8 May to Mon 11 May - BarraCrab Clairview
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 12th May from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - B2B Autumn Escalade Horsie Rides Comms Support - Sat 16 to Sun 17 May - Bluewater Park Equestrian Centre
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 19th May from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 26th May from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - WRERA Euri Gold Tropical Winter Horsie Rides Comms Support - Fri arvo 29th to Sun 31st May - Euri Gold Farms near Bowen

June

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 2nd June from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Snow 4's Famous Foxhunt - Sat 6th June somewhere in the Townsville area
 - Queensland Day - Sat 6th June - QUEENSLANDER!
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 9th June from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 16th June from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 23rd June from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - NQORA Millchester Challenge Off Road Racing - Sat 27 June to Sun 28 June - Millchester MSRC
 - MARA Valley Riders Dee Jay Arabians Denison Creek Horsie Rides - Sat 27th to Sun 28th June
 - Tech On The Air Net Tue 30th June from 7-30pm on Tsvl VHF Repeater and VK4PQ AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

July

- TARC displays Amateur Radio at the Dam Fine Rally, Kelso - Sat 4th July
 - TARC Management Meeting - Tue 7th July from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 14th July from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - B2B Paluma Push Horsie Rides Comms Support - Sat 18 to Sun 19 July - Bluewater Park Equestrian Centre
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 21st July from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 28th July from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

August

- MARA Valley Riders Greg Willoughby Memorial Denison Creek Horsie Rides - Sat 1 to Sun 2 August
 - TARC Management Meeting - Tue 4th August from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 11th August from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - WRERA Euri Gold Winter Harvest Horsie Rides Comms Support - Fri arvo 14th to Sun 16th August - Euri Gold Farms near Bowen
 - TOWSA Maggie Island Swim Comms Support - Sat 15th August from 5-30am Strand Park
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 18th August from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - NQORA Pato's 7 Hour Enduro Off Road Racing - Sat 22 August to Sun 23 August - Millchester MSRC
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net Tue 25th August from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

September

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 1st September from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - B2B Spring Shore Horsie Rides Comms Support - Sat 5 to Sun 6 September at Bluewater Park
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 8th September from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 15th September from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net Tue 22nd September from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - CHARC AGM Weekend - Fri arvo 25 to Sun morn 27 Sept - Venue TBA
 - Tech On The Air Net Tue 29th September - from 7-30pm on Tsvl VHF Repeater and VK4PQ AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

October

- Cardwell Gathering - Fri 2nd Oct to Mon 5th Oct at Meunga Creek Caravan Park
 - TARC Management Meeting - Tue 6th Oct from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - NQORA Charters Towers Short Circuit Off Road Racing - Sat 10th October to Sun 11th October - Millchester MSRC
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 13th October from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Jamboree On The Air/Jamboree On The Internet - Fri 16 to Sun 18 Oct
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 20th Oct from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 27th Oct from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

November

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 3rd Nov from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 10th Nov from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 17th Nov from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - theTARCinc Annual General Meeting - Sun 22nd Nov Rossiter Park Aitkenvale - 7am Brekkie - 8-30am AGM
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net Tue 24th Nov - from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes

December

- TARC Management Meeting - Tue 1st Dec from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Project Night - Tue 8th Dec from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC Xmas Party - Sun 13th December
 - TARC Social Evening - Tue 15th December from 7-30pm at the Club Rooms Green Street West End
 - TARC MXLT - Friday 18th December somewhere in Townsville
 - Ann Renton Memorial Net - Tue 22nd December - from 7-30pm on Tsvl UHF Repeater and VK4TUB AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - Tech On The Air Net Tue 29th Dec from 7-30pm on Tsvl VHF Repeater and VK4PQ AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - New Years Day Countdown - Thur 31st December - from 1245UTC for Daylight Saving, from 1345UTC for proper time

January 2027

- Tech On The Air Net Bonus Tue 19th January from 7-30pm on Tsvl VHF Repeater and VK4PQ AllStarLink & Echolink Nodes
 - Australia Day Long Week Family Radio Camp - Sat morn 23rd to Wed lunch 27th Jan - Girl Guides Training Centre Bluewater

TECHNICAL ARTICLE

Submitted by Iain/VK4IGM, IEEE Member

IEEE Spectrum February 2026

Explore the Stratosphere With a DIY Pico balloon.

A tiny ham-radio transmitter lets you track a balloon globally.

David Schneider 31 Jan 2026 4 min read

[amateur radio](#) [amateur science](#) [ham radio](#) [pico balloon](#) [pico ballooning](#)

There's an interesting development in amateur ballooning: using so-called superpressure balloons, which float high in the atmosphere indefinitely rather than simply going up and up and then popping like a normal weather balloon. Superpressure balloons can last for months and travel long distances, potentially circumnavigating the globe, all the while reporting their position.

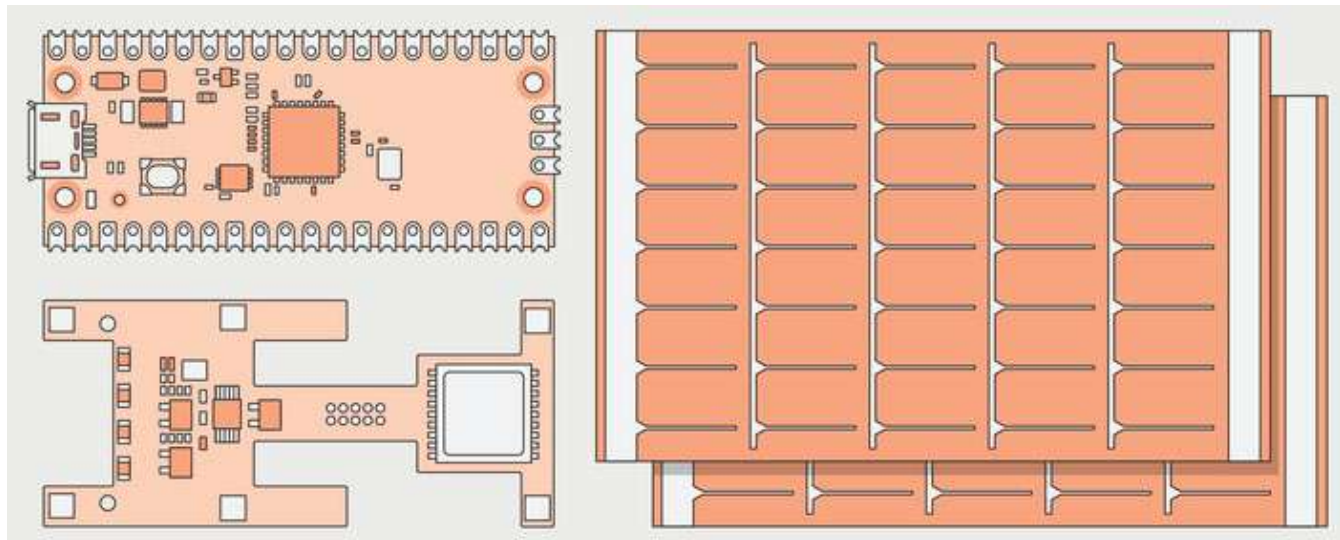
You might imagine that an undertaking like this would be immensely difficult and cost thousands of dollars. In fact, you can build and launch such a balloon for about the cost of a fancy dinner out. You just have to think small! That's why amateur balloonists call them pico balloons.

The payload of a pico balloon is so light (between 12 to 30 grams) that you can use a large Mylar party balloon filled with helium to lift it. They're also inexpensive; that's important because you won't get your payload back. And because such diminutive payloads don't pose a danger to aircraft, they aren't subject to the many rules and restrictions on free-floating balloons that carry more mass.

The essential advances that made pico ballooning possible were figuring out how to track a balloon no matter where in the world it might be and how to power such tiny payloads. A lot of folks worked on these challenges and came up with good solutions that aren't hard or expensive to reproduce.

What is WSPR?

Amazingly, the global tracking of the balloon's telemetry is done without satellites. Instead, pico balloonists take advantage of an amateur-radio network called WSPR (Weak Signal Propagation Reporter), a protocol developed by a rather famous ham-radio enthusiast—Joseph Hooton Taylor Jr., one of the two scientists awarded the 1993 Nobel Prize in Physics for discovering binary pulsars.



A Raspberry Pi Pico microcontroller [top left] is soldered directly to a daughterboard consisting of a high-frequency transmitter and a GPS module [bottom left], which are all powered by solar panels [right]. James Provost WSPR was designed to monitor signal-propagation conditions for different radio bands—useful information if you're a ham trying to make distant contacts. WSPR can also record low-power balloon-telemetry signals. WSPR is very low bandwidth—less than 10 bits per minute—but it does the job. A worldwide network of radio amateurs receives these WSPR signals and reports them publicly over the internet, which gives picoballoonists a way to track their flights. In the United States you need at least a general-class ham-radio license to launch a pico balloon, as one is required to transmit on the bands used for long-distance telemetry.

The pico balloon payload I chose to build is based on the aptly named US \$4 Raspberry Pi Pico board, with a solder-on daughterboard that contains a GPS receiver and transmitter. The folks who developed this daughterboard and associated software (to create what they call the Jetpack WSPR Tracker) have done a fantastic job of making their work easy to reproduce.

You could, in principle, power the Jetpack tracker with batteries, but in practice it would be impossible to keep them warm in the stratosphere, where average temperatures can be as low as -51°C . Instead, the tracker runs off two lightweight solar modules. At night, it gracefully powers down. When the sun rises high enough in the morning, the tracker powers up and starts transmitting again.

My first pico balloon made it only halfway across the Atlantic before going silent.

I had five Jetpack boards custom-manufactured in [China](#) for just \$39. The cost nearly doubled after adding shipping and tariff charges. Still that's really cheap, even when you add the cost of the Raspberry Pi (\$4), [the party balloon](#) (\$10 for two), the helium (\$10 at my local supermarket), and the two [solar modules](#) (\$7 each). The biggest sticking point I had with the Jetpack design was the liberties it takes with spurious emissions from its transmitter. Federal Communications Commission ([FCC](#)) regulations call for spurious emissions to be at least 43 decibels below the power of the transmitted signal. But my transmitter had strong unwanted emissions at odd harmonics of the fundamental frequency. (That's because the transmitter is a [Si5351A](#) temperature-controlled oscillator, which outputs a square wave, not a sinusoid.) Taking measurements, I could see that the third harmonic at 42 megahertz was only 25 dB quieter than the 14-MHz fundamental of my WSPR signal's frequency.



As of press time, the WSPR network had tracked my balloon from the Eastern [United States](#) to the Mediterranean coast. (James Provost)

In practical terms, this shouldn't create any noticeable interference, given that this transmitter puts out milliwatts at most and floats miles away from the nearest receiver. Still, I wanted to be fully compliant with FCC regulations, so I added traps to the antenna—simple circuit elements that hams use to allow a single antenna to work on multiple bands by altering how the antenna resonates at different frequencies. Each trap was made of a small inductor (four 5-millimeter-diameter loops of No. 32 magnet wire) in parallel with a 220-picofarad capacitor. I tuned them with the help of a [NanoVNA](#) signal analyzer by stretching the loops apart slightly. I attached the traps directly to the tracker board, so that they quashed the spurious 42-MHz emissions at the source. That worked well and added only 0.3 grams of weight.

With my payload complete, I partially filled my balloon with helium. You want the balloon to hold just a little more gas than it takes to lift the payload off the ground. This will give the helium room to expand as the balloon climbs to its final altitude.

My first pico balloon, launched from a park near my home in North Carolina, made it only halfway across the Atlantic before going silent. My second went up and was never heard from again. The third was indeed the charm. It crossed the Iberian Peninsula and at the time of this writing is somewhere over the Mediterranean at an altitude of nearly 12 kilometres. With any luck, [it might go on](#) to orbit the planet.

I'm a little puzzled about the balloons' telemetry messages received on the WSPR network, as they have been few and far between. My best guess is that power from the horizontal solar panels I'm using is marginal, with the winter sun being so low in the sky. That's something I should have thought about before launching the first balloon just 24 hours after the winter solstice!

This article appears in the February 2026 print issue as "Long-Duration Amateur Ballooning."

More Amateur Radio related articles on [IEEE Spectrum](#)

[The Most Hackable Handheld Ham Radio Yet >](#)

[Build a Long-Distance Data Network Using Ham Radio >](#)

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[Propagation Map | WSPRnet >](#)

[David Schneider](#) is a former editor at *IEEE Spectrum*, and continues to contribute Hands On articles

Ray Hinks VK4LU – Silent Key



TARC Life Member Ray Hinks VK4LU has gone Silent Key.

with David/VK2ELS, Iain/VK4IGM & Sheila/VK4PAL at the 2005 Xmas Party

Ray was a former member of the Queensland Police Service, a foundation member of the Townsville Civil Defence Volunteers, and volunteer with the Townsville Division of the Queensland State Emergency Service.

Ray came to Australia with his family from the UK when only a nipper but could remember the bleak weather in blighty. He much enjoyed the tropical weather of Townsville, constantly scoffed the weather boffins forecast for rain and rugged up well when the temperature in North Queensland dipped below 15C.



2 Rays – Ray/VK4OIL & Ray/VK4LU at the 2007 AGM.



checking out treasure at the VK4JWC QTH during the 2014 Xmas Party

Ray did great things for the TARCinc, serving as Treasurer and also setting up through the local federal members of Parliament permission to print the magazine of renown, Back-scatter, an arrangement that continues to this day.

While in good health Ray was also active on HF and out in the field, helping with many comms support events. He was an early experimenter in Packet Radio, starting with a C64 and Digicom and eventually taming Windows with TST-Host and TPK before moving to Linux and exploring low signal modes. He was also a regular participant of the North Queensland Net and the WIA News Callback Nets.



Ray/VK4LU running the 2018 AGM Election while Gavin/VK4ZZ scribed. Ray/VK4LU with President Snow/VK4ME at the 2015 AGM.

He enjoyed holidays away fruit picking and occasionally touring the Cape in his old but reliable Hi-Lux van (he went places with the 2-wheel drive vehicle many 4wd drivers would avoid) and always said that he would be lucky to see 70years old.

Well, he made it to 92.

During the last year Ray's health started to decline even more and a diagnosis of Stage 4 Cancer sealed the deal. He enrolled in the Volunteer Assisted Dying scheme, set his affairs in order and went Silent Key in Townsville University Hospital on Friday 23rd January at 0400UTC. Before passing between 0335 and 0338UTC Ray's daughter Yvette went on-air as Ray's Second Operator through the Townsville VHF Repeater and asked for any stations to send Ray any last messages. TARC Club Station VK4WIT responded, wishing Ray good DX and best journeys on his DXpedition in the next world.

Ray's funeral was a private service attended by family members.

Vale Ray Hinks VK4LU - Silent Key.
