



# CTAF survey results - Summary

## FREQUENCY CONGESTION AT BALLINA, LISMORE AND CASINO AERODROMES

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## Overview

The Office of Airspace Regulation (OAR)<sup>1</sup> has identified that frequency congestion around Ballina, Lismore, Casino and Evans Head aerodromes could be reduced through the allocation of a separate Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF) for Lismore and Casino, or the establishment of a separate broadcast area.

## Background

Ballina aerodrome shares its radio frequency of 124.2 MHz with Lismore, Casino and Evans Head aerodromes. These aerodromes have a large mix of traffic and over the last decade have become busier. Changes have been made in the Ballina area to create a broadcast area to ensure radio calls are being made to help enhance traffic awareness.

The OAR has visited the Ballina area on numerous occasions and has conducted extensive consultation with stakeholders. Through these visits, stakeholders have consistently raised their concerns regarding the radio congestion in the area as a result of the shared radio frequency.

## Survey

A survey of industry stakeholders was conducted between 9 June 2021 and 11 July 2021. Information regarding the survey was sent directly to 82 local stakeholders, organisations, councils and national associations. Information was also sent out to Aviation State Engagement Forum (AvSEF) members, it was a featured consultation on the consultation hub, it was emailed out in the June CASA briefing and featured in the May and June regulatory wrap up newsletters.

## Results

The survey received 83 responses via the CASA Consultation Hub and one (1) response directly to the OAR.

Any comments from respondents have been included verbatim.

The OAR will review the results comments and formulate a proposal to consult with stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> A list of abbreviations and acronyms used in this report are contained in Annex A.

**QUESTION 1:****Should Lismore and Casino Airports be allocated a different CTAF to Ballina?**

The majority of respondents (70) supported the proposal. Those against the proposal (14) cited the proximity of the instrument approaches at Ballina and Lismore as the main reason for their response.

A number of respondents added comments to add context to their response:

Comments supporting the proposal included:

- Airservices Australia (Airservices) believes radio frequency congestion at Lismore and Casino Airports would be reduced if they were to be allocated their own discrete CTAF frequency.
- This will reduce confusion and traffic radio congestion in the greater Casino, Ballina, Lismore, Evans Heads area.
- They should not be on 126.7.
- Given the density of traffic and the geographic nature I think a dedicated CTAF is now required.
- I fly both visual flight rules (VFR) and Instrument flight rules (IFR) aircraft in this area and from time to time struggle to make appropriate and mandatory broadcasts due to the high volume of traffic. A frequency change makes a lot of sense.
- Recreation Aviation Australia (RAAus) has determined from interactions with the RAAus Flight Training Schools and Chief Flying Instructors in the area that a discrete CTAF for Lismore and Casino, to a sufficient distance and height to allow upper air flight training in that CTAF would greatly assist with congestion and over transmission issues in the Lismore/Casino area relative to Ballina.
- Flying training at Lismore and RPT into Lismore create considerable extra radio traffic for Ballina. This extra traffic is detrimental to the ability of jet and RPT traffic into Ballina to maintain a positive situational awareness of relevant aircraft. Overall the radio procedures of the traffic at Lismore is sub-standard and often does not include the location in the broadcasts.
- AusALPA strongly believe that a more strategic and holistic approach is required than those currently proposed. CASA OAR should conduct an aeronautical risk review of the Ballina airspace to consider a change of classification of the airspace.

Comments against the proposal included:

- The Area Navigation (RNAV) 06 approach for Ballina and the RNAV 33 approach for Lismore overlap each other. When flying one of these, it is essential to be able to monitor the CTAF at both airports, as well as ATC. If the CTAFs for Ballina and Lismore are different, that will be very difficult.
- While traffic at Ballina has undoubtedly increased due to commercial RPT operations, there is no significant increase in traffic movements at Casino unless there are firefighting operations in progress. To establish separate frequencies in such a small area will just confuse local operators and cause frequent frequency changing rather than vigilance for seen and avoid operations.
- This could potentially do more harm than good, particularly if traffic forgets to change frequency. Lismore and Ballina Airport are only 15NM apart, their instrument approaches basically overlap. There is a high chance of traffic conflict if this is to take place.
- The problem with this solution results in IFR aircraft on approach listening on two different CTAFs. They should normally receive traffic information from Brisbane centre for self-separation but would mean frequency confusion issues when they tried to communicate with each other, which they frequently do.

**QUESTION 2:**

**If Lismore and Casino Airports are allocated a different CTAF, should CASA declare a broadcast area 10 nautical miles (nm) around Lismore and Casino aerodromes?**

The majority of respondents supported the proposal. The survey did not ask respondents to add comments to their response. **Note:** One respondent did not answer this question.

Yes	54
No	29

**QUESTION 3:**

**If a broadcast area is declared around Lismore and Casino - what would be an appropriate upper limit (in feet above mean sea level)?** **Note:** One respondent did not answer this question.

1,500 feet AMSL	2
2,000 feet AMSL	2
2,500 feet AMSL	1
3,000 feet AMSL	10
3,500 feet AMSL	4
4,000 feet AMSL	2
4,500 feet AMSL	14
5,000 feet AMSL	23
5,500 feet AMSL	3
6,000 feet AMSL	3
6,500 feet AMSL	4
7,500 feet AMSL	2
8,500 feet AMSL	8
Did not answer	6

**QUESTION 4:**

**Should the Evans Head CTAF change?**

**Note:** One respondent did not answer this question.

Be changed to 126.7 - the same as Swan Bay which is close by	54
Be the same as Lismore and Casino (assuming they are allocated a separate CTAF to Ballina)	13
Remain the same as Ballina and not be changed	16

**QUESTION 5:**

**Should the Ballina broadcast area be reduced in size from 15nm to 10nm in radius of Ballina?**

**Note:** One respondent did not answer this question.

Yes	54
No	13

**QUESTION 6:**

**Should the upper limit of the Ballina broadcast area be lowered from 8,500 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) to 4,500 feet AMSL?**

**Note:** One respondent did not answer this question.

Yes	42
No	41

## ANNEX A – Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADS-B	Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast
Airservices	Airservices Australia
ALA	Aircraft landing area
AMSL	above mean sea level
ATC	air traffic control
AVSeF	Aviation State Engagement Forum
CA/GRS	Certified Air / Ground Radio Service
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
CTAF	Common Traffic Advisory Frequency
GA	general aviation
IAP	Instrument Approach Procedure
IFR	instrument flight rules
MBZ	Mandatory Broadcast Zone
NM	nautical miles
OAR	Office of Airspace Regulation
RAAus	Recreation Aviation Australia
RNAV	Area Navigation
RPT	Regular public transport
SFIS	Surveillance Flight Information Service
VFR	visual flight rules
VHF	Very High Frequency
WPT	waypoint