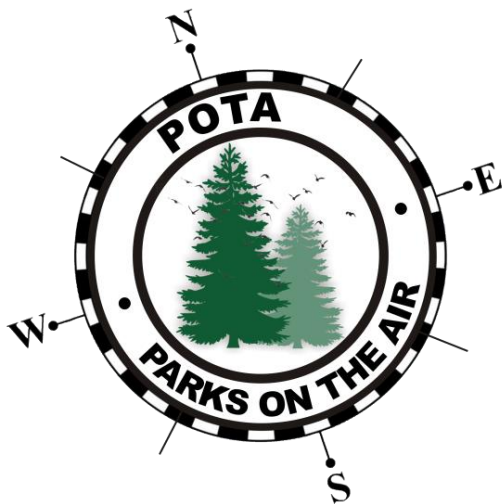


What is all this about?

To answer your question, I'm an
Amateur radio operator participating
in a radio sport called Parks On The
Air (POTA).



What is POTA?

POTA is a non-profit organization that supports the use of amateur radio in our national and state parks. Through promotion by Parks On The Air, more people will discover and enjoy our park system. This also directly helps amateur radio meet its charter of providing communications support in times of emergencies, such as after natural disasters.

POTA provides a website where amateur radio operators, often called "hams", can find nearby parks. Hams then set up temporary portable radio stations



and attempt to contact as many fellow hams as possible. Visiting a park and getting on the air is called an "activation" and after each one, the hams will submit a list of their contacts to POTA. The goals are to activate as many parks as possible and to talk to as many stations as

possible.

Hams, like other park visitors, must obey all park regulations and generally leave no trace of their operation after they leave. Some hams have radios in their car and simply operate from the parking lot. Some hams enjoy backpacking and hiking and may explore throughout the park setting up operations almost anywhere.

What is Amateur Radio?

For those involved it is fun, a way to learn and make new friends, a technical communications hobby or recreational activity that provides a true sense of personal achievement.

While we commonly hear about Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, long before they came along amateur radio was the world's first social media network and it continues to provide that role today.

While many talk on amateur radio, across town or around the world, radio amateurs also communicate in other interesting ways, such as amateur television and communicating via amateur radio satellites.

There is also a serious side to it with radio amateurs providing emergency communications. When disaster strikes the telephone, mobile phone and internet connection often fail or are overloaded.

This aspect of amateur radio, that gives support to rescue, relief and recovery efforts and saves lives, was seen following earthquakes and tsunamis in recent years including those in China, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Haiti and Chile.

The New York World Trade Centre terrorist attack on 11 September 2001, Hurricane Katrina 2005 and other major disasters have involved radio amateurs providing their skills and support.

In Australia emergency communications were provided in response to the Black Saturday bushfire disaster 2009. That followed a tradition which began in the 1920's during tropical cyclones in Queensland, the Black Friday bushfires in Victoria 1939, and includes the New South Wales floods in 1955, Tropical Cyclone Tracy 1974, Ash Wednesday disaster 1983,

Newcastle Earthquake 1989 and on numerous other occasions.

Who are these radio amateurs?

There are 16000+ radio amateurs in Australia and over two million in nearly every country in the world. They come from all walks of life – students, retirees, all kinds of professional people, truck drivers, tradespeople, hospitality staff, entertainers and others engaged in creative occupations.

They are part of the worldwide amateur radio community that has people of all ages with a common interest in radio communication, a start-up knowledge of today radio technologies, regulations and operating protocols.

Why a licence?

For more than a century those engaged in amateur radio have needed to demonstrate their knowledge in basic technical matters and the rules of the airwaves or regulations. They obtain an internationally recognised certificate, then a licence and their own personal radio callsign to operate.

Because radio does not stop at international borders it is subject to an international treaty to which Australia is a signatory. An amateur radio licence is like an international passport, except rather than personally travelling to other countries you do so via the airwaves.



The radio amateur makes friends in other countries, has an opportunity to learn more about their culture, and contribute to international goodwill.

What's the attraction of amateur radio?

Some are attracted by the ability to generate a radio signal and communicate across town, around the world, and even with astronauts on the International Space Station. Others bounce signals off the moon or communicate via satellites.

Some like to build their own equipment, accessories and antennas or experiment with leading edge technical developments, connecting a computer with a radio to communicate via a keyboard, or send and receive images and amateur television signals.

For young interested in any kind of technical or science career there is no better personal activity than amateur radio to give them hands-on experience and stimulate their minds.

It has led many to technical careers, including leaders in their fields who have obtained the Nobel Prize and credit their early interest in amateur radio as a contributing factor to their success.

The amateur radio community in the 21st century includes those experimenting with the latest electronics and advanced technologies. These include wireless digital communications, software defined radios (SDR), long-distance digital and image transmissions.

While others enjoy keeping the original communication system, Morse code, on the airwaves and are just as skilled as the earlier wireless telegraphers who began it all in the late 1890s.

What is the Wireless Institute of Australia?



The Wireless Institute of Australia – the WIA - is recognised as a voice of radio amateurs by the Australian regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The WIA is a member of the International Amateur Radio Union, the IARU, and an active participant in the IARU's regional organisation.

To learn more about amateur radio, visit the website www.wia.org.au

