

Key - Down Under

January 2020



VK2FDU
FISTS: 9610
Courtesy At All Times

The International Morse Preservation Society



FISTS Down Under Inc.



ZL6FF
FISTS: 9600
Accuracy Transcends Speed



Shack photo: Phil VK3VB. A couple of Bugs

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 <http://www.fdu.org.au>

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>

 <http://n8fq.org/sked/index.php?board=fdu>

Recommended FDU calling frequencies (MHz)

1.818	3.528	7.028	10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058			

Members photo – VK3QB key collection



Welcome to 2021!

Happy New Year! We wish all members and friends a safe, healthy, and prosperous new year.

Committee is pleased to announce our new website is now online. Have a look around and send us your feedback.

www.fdu.org.au

Please send us pics of your favourite key/paddle/bug and (if you'd like) your mugshot... we'll post it on the new web site... a nice way for members to "see" who they are working.

And if you're on Facebook, but haven't yet joined our page, just follow this link.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>

Committee resolved to maintain membership fees at \$0 until the 2021 AGM later this year. So, no fees are payable and no donations please.

And to keep our VK members up to date with what's happening in ZL, check out **NZ Net News 46, 9 January 2021** at the following link.

<http://radio1nz.com/about-amateur-radio/new-zealand-nets/nz-net/newsletters/nr46/>

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- CW Contesting – by Patrick VK2PN
- RBN Grants – one grant still available.
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Do you want to learn or improve your Morse?

Most of us are on the journey of improving our Morse Code skills. Some are in the learning phase and looking to gain confidence as they master the basics. For others, they want to improve “head” copy, accuracy, or speed. For some it’s about improving conversational skills, for others its chasing DX or contesting. And of course, others are wanting to use a new sending technique or a new key, paddle, or bug. The common theme is skills development.

FDU offers a few resources to assist, and we’d like to revitalise some of these options in 2021.

Morse Code Buddies

We’ve introduced a Morse Code Buddy program. Head over to our “Learning the Morse Code” page to read the details.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/getting-on-air/>

Or, if you’d like a friendly someone for sked at a time that suits, a speed that suits and maybe even a Zoom or phone session going at the same time, reach out and connect with a buddy. You could even switch between SSB and CW if that helps as you build your on-air confidence.

A Morse Code Certificate of Proficiency

Amateur Radio is the last bastion of Morse Code practitioners. However, almost 20 years ago the regulatory requirement for Morse Code proficiency was dropped.

Would you like a certificate to acknowledge your proficiency? Head to the Awards and Certificates page on our web site for more information.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/awards/>

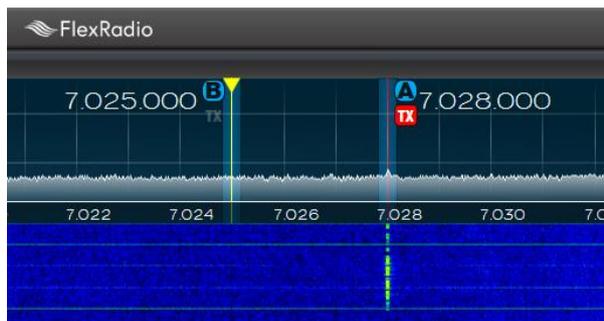


FDU Calling frequencies.

Many members in VK and ZL hang out on the frequencies listed on our “About us” page

<http://www.fdu.org.au/about-us/>

During the day (at least here in VK3 and the states surrounding us) it seems we have two popular frequencies on 40m. 7.025 and 7.028MHz.



As many of us are either retired or working from home these days there tends to be a fair bit of day-time activity – so spin the dial, have a listen.... BUT... put out a call also. The regulars to look out for include VK5GG, VK2CCW, VK2ARZ, VK2ASB, VK2GBR, VK5CZ, VK3VB and VK3QB – I’m sure I’ve missed a few but it’s usually easy to get a

response to a CQ call on 7.025 or 7.028 sometime through the day.

FISTS Down Under Sked Page

The FDU Sked page is underutilised. Check it out.. pop it in your “favourites” on your web browser. As you see from the image below, it’s a simple notification resource you can use to post your activity and to see where others may be listening or calling.

<http://n8fq.org/sked/index.php?board=fdu>

FISTS Down Under Sked Page

<http://fdu.org.au>

MM/DD	UTC	Activity
01/12	12:58	<VK3QB> listening 7.014 [x]
01/06	00:42	<VK3VB> listening 7,025 between meetings
01/05	21:34	<VK3VB> 14.058
01/05	05:09	<VK3VB> qso with Adam VK2NNW on 28,058
01/05	04:38	<VK3VB> 28.058
12/26	03:16	<VK1MCW> 6m?? Why not? Open to VK4...
12/22	03:31	<VK2HAO> listening on 28.490
12/07	23:24	<VK3VB> calling now 18.0825
12/07	22:34	<VK3VB> listening 18.0825 today



Bug Off! (FDU Event)

Last month (20 Dec) we trialled a new FISTS Down Under activity. The Bug Off activity. It's intended to be mostly a social on-air activity to promote the use of bugs and straight keys. This event was well patronised with about 14 members taking part. At least one operator included a DX station in his log! It was great to hear so many individual "fists" and I know more than one of us had a great time mastering(?) a bug.

Overall, we were pleased with the event and member feedback has been positive. It was great to hear all the fists out there... we've decided we'll try giving the "Bug off" event a monthly schedule and see how it goes. But.. we'll make some changes based on the feedback.

The event will now be four hours duration and limited to 80 metres... so we don't have to spread out so much. Committee will issue random awards – based on participation, operator performance with a bug/key, quality social QSOs... really what-ever takes our fancy. 😊

Soap Box comments from 20 December 2020 BUG OFF!

Chris VK1CT

The Bug Off event was a good opportunity for me to press the old AWA Manipulating Key (model R688B) into service. It sits alongside my Bencher paddles, but I rarely use it. I bought the AWA key in 2016 on ebay for \$63. It's a very solid key, in good condition and has a nice action. I made five contacts during the event, all on 80m. Radio was an Elecraft K3 running 70 watts to an end fed antenna.



I've attached a photo of the key I used. Thanks for organising the event. I hope you have a nice Christmas. Catch you on the bands again soon.

73, Chris VK1CT

Dan VK7DP

I had a great time on both 40 and 80. I was using my 1942 Vibroplex bug. Although my bug skills were rusty I had a blast. I also have a 1930 Vibroplex bug but it needs a good cleaning and some work/adjustments. Perhaps it will be ready for the next event. Thanks to the organizers. Merry Christmas and happy new year to all.

73

Dan

VK7DP



Phil VK3VB

I managed to work through 4 straight keys, 2 bugs and a paddle set up as a side swiper.

Start time suited me, but probably no point going passed midnight.

Great to have QSO's at everything from around 8wpm to just over 20wpm.

Enjoyed some longer contacts with FISTS members, but more activity would make it even more fun. I think using 80m and 40m was good, but it dilutes the activity a bit. I think most activity was on 80m and a few people probably called on 40m with limited activity as most were on 80m. Not sure on solution for that.

Definitely interested in more the same or similar.



It's not the best picture - but it was 1am in the morning..... the different bugs / keys etc I pushed into service during the night. I was making leads, swapping leads as the night went on. Have to fix that for next time.

David VK2JDR

I made one qso on 40. Listened on 80 nothing heard.

Chris VK3QB



I had a great time... I'm feeling much more confident using the VizKey "bug" and really enjoyed the event. I managed 12 contacts including one JA. A couple of repeat contacts as well. A few hours in front of the radio improving morse code skills is always time well spent. I look forward to then next event.

I used the VizKey "bug" exclusively for this event; the dedicated practice was worth while and I was also able to have a play with the settings. Sitting to the left is the Begali Blade key – which got a rest for this event.

BUG OFF – 2021 Quarter 1

Third Sunday of the month - 0900 – 1259UTC

17 January – THIS SUNDAY!

21 February

21 March

- 80m bug & straight key session (centre around 3528 but look in the CW segment for activity)
- Get on-air with your key/bug. Exchange FISTS numbers where possible. Repeat QSOs are fine if it means you're keeping that key or bug busy.

Entry: Summary of your log, commentary of band conditions and contacts, description of your station & antenna and photos of your bug or key.

Send entries to secretary@fdu.org.au

FISTS Down Under AX Activity Day

26th January 2021 – VK Hams can use the AX Prefix

- Use the AX prefix on higher bands 15 and 10 metres only – 0100UTC through 0900UTC.
- 1 point for VK
- 4 points for DX

Entry: Summary of your log, claimed score, commentary of band conditions, description of your station & antenna and photos of your station. Send entries to secretary@fdu.org.au

FISTS Down Under DXCC Awards

This is another initiative by FDU to encourage more activity now Sun-Spot Cycle 25 is with us and conditions are picking up. There are few different awards you can apply for and we've decided to use Club Log as our official online award tracking system. This way, you can easily upload your logs and keep track of your progress whilst checking out how other FDU members are going.

And to acknowledge two of our most active members on Club Log we'll have a special category just for Ian ZL2AIM and Luke VK3HJ. 😊 First to the finish-line chaps!

Check it out at

<http://www.fdu.org.au/awards/>

FISTS Down Under Worked most Band Slots Award

Once again, this award is designed to encourage more activity. The conditions are the same as the DXCC Awards.... Get your logs loaded onto Club Log and track your progress along with other members.

And Ian and Luke are in category one... everyone else in category two. 😊



All FDU awards will use Club Log for verification, ease of administration and transparent tracking. Visit these pages for more info:

<https://clublog.org/>

<https://fists.co.uk/dxccleague.aspx?c=du&fbclid=IwAR3tiwr1TtysBwD1J2r-r5qiyygFQeI7ISLPNiX5tDdCNDv3qkRSNiXWuryE>

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Why I like CW

The following story was recently brought to our attention. It illustrates how diverse and interesting our hobby can be... and Morse Code even more-so. The Code breaks through language barriers and opens up contacts with other hams we'd never otherwise meet.

23 December 2020 | by Ken N7K0 | Share | | Leave a Comment (2)

I was wandering up and down the 20 meter CW portion of the band, yesterday. At one point I heard a very faint signal down in the sticks calling CQ, I listened and listened and still not sure if I got his call correct, no one was answering the call so I answered back...

Py2AA de N7KO N7KO N7KO K

The op answered back (N7KO de PY2AAM TNX FER CALL UR RST 339 33N name is ROD QTH is Santa Cruz Do Rio Pardo, BRAZIL HW CPY N7KO de PY2AAM)

I got his full call this time. We were able to make the exchange, RST, rig es Ant, QTH. It was difficult but we pulled it off. Here is the email he sent me, after I sent him one thanking him for taking the difficult journey with me.

(Olá amigo Ken!

Fiquei muito feliz em receber seu e-mail.

E também feliz pelo nosso encontro em CW, sou um eterno aprendiz desta arte maravilhosa que é a telegrafia.

Realmente estava com um pouco de dificuldade de escutar sua estação, devido a QSB e QRN...valeu muito o nosso esforço porque agora tenho um novo amigo.)

The reason why I shared this email is I can only read English and I had to copy and load it into a translator to understand what he said. But when we communicated using Morse Code there was no language barrier. You all know this as I did but this drove it home.

Now if I had waited until I was sure I got the Op's call 100% before answering, I may have missed connecting to a new friend in another country. If I was not using CW neither of us could have communicated to one another.

Ken G

N7K0

73' everyone

Ken Gairson, N7KO, is a special contributor to AmateurRadio.com and writes from Washington, USA.

Source: <https://www.amateurradio.com/why-i-like-cw/>



CW Contesting

By Patrick VK2PN

I hope the article will be of interest to all, from the beginners (or rookies as the US amateurs call them) to the very experienced. In any CW contest you will always get a mixture of both ends of the skill and experience spectrum.

After more than a decade of contesting I still consider myself a "contester in training".

Why do I do it...?

Because it is fun.

Can you imagine you have a good run (we will talk about "a run" little later), you are on a band which is nicely open and you're working one station after another. They are calling you even without the need to call CQ and your rate is well over 150 QSO's per hour; sometimes even more.

There are quite a few contesters in VK land who can maintain even higher rates. I'd consider that as great fun and a key motivation to improve my skills.

I'll make a slight segway from Morse to SSB. The SSB operators in VK are also a good bunch. 😊 In SSB you are using a skill which is common to all of us - speech.

However, in international contests the SSB operator has copy a diverse range of accents and pronunciations. Varying phonetics are used, and you also have to put up with poorly adjusted transmitters and, of course, band noise. QRM from nearby stations can also be far harder to suppress than CW signals.

With CW there is no accent. Most (if not all) operators are using a computer or paddle and electronic keyer to transmit Morse. All CW characters will be pretty close to perfect and (*editor: should be*) easy to copy. Just narrow your filter a bit. And of course, I want my morse to be as perfect as possible, because I want my opposite to copy my exchange without any errors or repeats.

Reading Morse Code by ear requires skill. It's a skill that most can learn and develop. There are computer programs to read CW for you. However, there is no doubt that the human brain can still copy Morse better than any programs out there. Morse Code Contesting requires different skills to conversation QSOs. You must be quick and responsive. You must be able to multi-task and have what I'll call "radio fitness"... the ability to concentrate and copy signals and reports in your head. You must be able to filter out your target signal – the brain becomes a DSP. And you must have the mental fitness do this for hours on end.

There are at least two computer programs (I call them games) where you can practise the contest exchanges. The programs are so good that one can't figure out if that is a real test or just "a game".

One example is called Morse Runner

<http://www.dxatlas.com/morserunner/>

You can google this and watch some good YouTube videos.

CW contesting will also encourage you to work on station improvements. Most modern transceivers are good to use for contesting. The real advantage is in your antenna farm. **It is all about antennas.** Power helps but will not make much difference unless you are competing at elite levels in the high power world-wide contests. **The best amplifier is the antenna, and you will get receive as well as transmit advantages.**

In VK there are several clubs and individuals with great antennas and offer their facilities for contests. Being a part of a contest team can be more fun than sitting in your shack (lonely). Contesting is tiring and "fresh horses" at the keyboard every few hours make good sense. Besides, multi operator contest often leads to a barbecue, a few beers and lot of fun.

IN THE CONTEST:

- In a contest (applies to CW, SSB or digital) the other party will do their utmost to make the contact. If they can copy you and you copy them you are assured of a contact.
- In any contest there is a mixture of the "big boys (or big girls)" who rely on many small stations (wires and tribanders and/or running barefoot) to get the points. You, the small pistol, are as valuable to the "biggies" as any small or big station. Of course, the same applies to the opposite way. Everybody wants to make contact with everybody.
- Not everything is bliss. Imagine you are running and doing great. You just worked a DX station (big signal, fast morse). You are having a good run, he does not. So, after a few seconds the DX bruiser will start to call CQ on your frequency hoping that he will take over your run and totally kill your signal. So, you swallow your pride, find another frequency nearby and slowly get your run going again. Well, you may have guessed it... he does the same again.
- The European ZOO. Why can US and JA stations call you in very orderly fashion and the EU stations can't? I guess that is why they are called the ZOO. I'm sure every contester knows what I'm talking about. It adds to the "colour" of contesting. It requires skill and patience (and some would say madness!) to manage an EU pileup.
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LOGGING:

- Most contest organizers don't take paper logs any more. So, you must use a logging program to record your QSOs. Most software will also control your

radio and automatically include band and time entries for each contact, as well as managing and sending (sometimes receiving) the CW. There are many available and most work rather well. They not only calculate your score (produce the raw score), but produce an ADIF file for your station log and mainly produce "CABRILLO" file you send/email to the organizers. Then you sit and worry for the next few weeks wanting to know your real score and your place in the contest. The worry is how many miscopied calls and how many typos you have in your log. It all adds to the fun.

- The contest organisers have "one big" computer they feed all the logs into and the machine matches all the QSOs (there may be many millions of contacts) and then calculates your result and placing in the overall contest. Cool.
- The if you are lucky you can download your certificate as a .pdf file, print it, frame it and hang it on the wall of the shack. Could be very satisfying. People (not hams) asked me what do I get for a good placing in the contest? The answer is: NOTHING just get covered with glory.

The CQ WW CW

For the biggest CW contest of the year I was invited by Bernd VK2IA and John VK4CT to participate at their station. Wow, what a privilege. The setup is great. On the top of the hill, monobander antennas, great transceivers, and the great way the radios were interconnected and filtered. A dream of any contester (*ed: or DXer for that matter!*).

I was the "contester in training", but these boys are top end operators. In a situation like that you understand how some stations can win every time. It was fun.

So... where do you start?

The very next contest.

You only need to compete with yourself.

Locally, the Remembrance Day Contest (held in August each year) is friendly and welcoming for newcomers. But don't wait, check this website and try dipping your toe in the contesting waters... you might just find it adds a new level of excitement to your radio and Morse code activities.

<https://contestcalendar.com/>

73, Patrick VK2PN

Reverse Beacon Network Grant

FDU still has approved funding for one more RBN Grant. We'd really like to see something in VK2. So, if you think your club might be interested please send us an email and we'll reach out to them. You can read ore about RBN here.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/reverse-beacon-network/>

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Membership Update

It is with disappointment and regret that we report committee voted to expel two members recently. This was only done after considerable deliberation and attempts to discuss the matters with the members involved. Their conduct was in breach of FISTS Down Under Inc. rules, and brought the club into disrepute.

If you have concerns with FDU, the committee or another member's conduct, you can raise your concerns with Committee.

FISTS Down Under will not tolerate or support any form on online bullying, vilification, or potential defamation. If any member feels a fellow member is in breach of our rules or policies, please raise the matter with committee.

New Federal Laws covering cyber-abuse are being considered. You can read more here.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-23/world-first-adult-cyber-abuse-crackdown-proposed-for-australia/13008470>

Our rules and policies are covered in our Constitution and also on our web site.

<http://www.fdu.org.au/about-us/>

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Well, that's it for this edition. Please email us with your feedback, questions, ideas and articles for the next edition. And don't forget to send us a few photos of your favourite keys, paddles, bugs, shack and your good self.

73, es c u on air from the FISTS Down Under Committee

Chris VK3QB, Derek VK3KX, Phil VK3VB, John VK2JSE, Glenn VK4DU es David ZL2WT