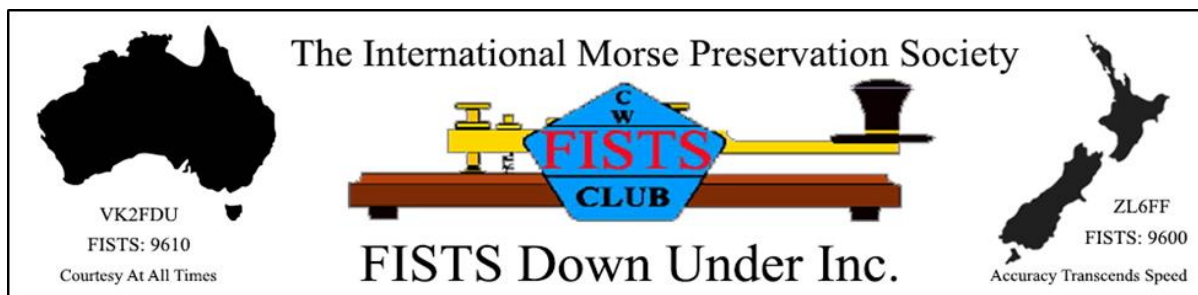


June 2023

Key - Down Under



Chris VK1CT's new portable ops kit

2022-2023 Committee

President	Chris VK3QB	Vk3qb(at)Hotmail.com
Secretary	Phil VK3VB	Ppavey(at)bigpond.com
Vice President	Derek VK3KX	
ZL Liaison	Philip ZL1PSH	zululima1psh(at)gmail.com
Treasurer	Chris VK3QB - acting	
Committee	Graeme VK5GG	



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



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

Recommended FDU calling frequencies (MHz)

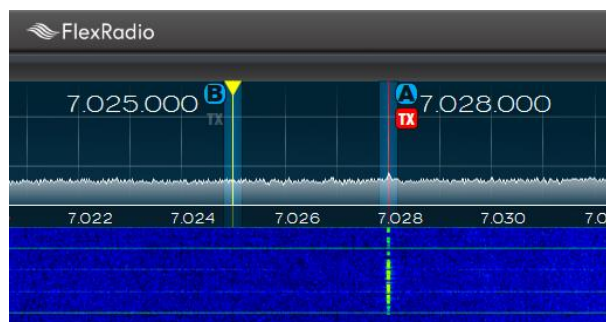
1.818	3.528	7.028	10.118	14.058	18.085
21.058	24.908	28.058			

FDU Calling frequencies

Many members in VK and ZL hang out on the frequencies listed above which are also on our "About us" page.

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

During the day (at least on the East Coast of VK) it seems we have two popular frequencies on 40m. 7.025 and 7.028MHz. Or 7.030....



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.

Night-time... 3.528Mhz.

Welcome to our June newsletter.



We are jam-packed with some new news, and of course have the regular member stories. Our weekly event, the QSO Party, is getting a sibling due to popularity.

I'm sorry I've been snowed under with work lately, so haven't had a chance to fill the Upcoming Events calendar this month. Please keep an eye on the FDU Facebook page and Discord for regular updates (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/349974226381281>). If you have anything to add for July, please email me or your favourite committee member, and we can include it in the July newsletter.

Please keep the content coming and share your photos and story, we all love hearing from other members, and that's what this newsletter is all about. You also don't have to be a member to be on the list to receive this newsletter (but why not, FDU membership is free!)

Ben VK2JA – Editor

Upcoming Events – June 2023

Every Friday night – FDU QSO Party on or around 3528kHz and 7028kHz. 2100 EST (1100z). Call or answer CQs and make QSOs, long or short, fast or slow.

The new Question Time net will begin 15 minutes prior to the QSO Party every Friday – see further down in this newsletter for full details!

The QSO Party is the perfect event for newcomers or people still getting comfortable in CW, as well as more seasoned CW ops, in a welcoming, supportive environment. The Friday Night QSO parties are fun, relaxed events and we are keen to see even more people join in! Speed doesn't matter, and you don't have to ragchew either (unless you want to).

<https://www.fdu.org.au/fdu-qso-party/>

Friday 9 June 1030Z (2030 AEST, 2230 NZT) - Zoom Session for FAQ for the Question Time Net. For more info, see further down in the Newsletter. Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81381487386?pwd=N3dwK2ZVSIN6SVFoc2g5WWdrazRIQT09>, Passcode is 138505

Notes from the President

Hello members and readers and welcome to Winter.

In the background your committee has been working to make FDU more streamlined and efficient. We want to spend our time promoting Morse code and helping newcomers, and these changes will free us up from the adminstrivia that is not really adding much value to our collective love of morse code and amateur radio.



NEW MEMBERS and the MEMBERSHIP LIST

On this page <https://www.fdu.org.au/membership/> you will see some updates:

FDU Membership is still free. FISTS in the UK allocates and manages all membership numbers world-wide. They have agreed to handle all new membership applications for FDU. FDU will no longer manage membership lists or handle membership enquiries.

To join, simply send an email to [fdu\(at\)fists.co.uk](mailto:fdu(at)fists.co.uk) with your:

name,
callsign,
email address,
permission to publish your name and callsign in lists.

They will send you your membership number. Similarly, if you wish to look up member details or download lists, head over the FISTS UK website.

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

Our Newsletter Editor Ben VK2JA will manage his own distribution list for newsletter distribution. All new members will be added to Ben's list, but if you aren't receiving newsletters and you'd like to, just drop Ben an email.

COMMITTEE FOCUS AREAS

By making these changes, committee is now free to do 3 things – which is what we'd all rather focus on:

1. Promote Morse code
2. Handle requests to assist people to learn or improve morse code
3. Discuss and implement activities that further the art of morse code

73, Chris VK3QB

FISTS #9085, President

Don Edwards Slow Morse contest wrap

The Don Edwards Slow Morse contest in May felt more of a friendly on-air gathering than a contest. With a speed limit of 10WPM, it was very relaxed, easy to copy or send, and a great time was had by all. I worked VK2, VK3 and VK4 on 80 metres, but was unable to participate the following afternoon on 40 metres. We appeared to have a range of skill levels, which was great to see, as the contest is all about encouraging people who probably wouldn't normally do a CW contest due to the high speeds of most contest operators.

I'm looking forward to more Friday Night QSO Parties and the QT Net for more relaxed, slow CW that I can keep up with and keep getting better!

Ben VK2JA

FISTS Down Under & CW OPS

Question Time (QT) Net and QSO Party

FDU is offering an initiative to assist CW operators become more skilled by providing building blocks towards advanced use of CW. To take advantage and get into the swing of things, all you need to do is participate in a short Question Time (QT) Net immediately preceding the usual Friday QSO Party.

The QSO Party on Friday nights has been well received by a small and dedicated group of CW operators. It's now been running for one year and we have up to 12 participants sending in logs, and as many as 15 to 18 operators participating each week. We've decided to build on this activity and introduce a short 'Question Time' activity prior to the QSO Party.

We hope that by bolting this on to an existing activity more operators will be able to participate as the time commitment really is only an additional 15 minutes.

The QT Net will have a Net Control Station (NCS), VK2FDU, which will introduce commonly-used net Q-codes to provide training and familiarity. The NCS will send one question to all stations. Operators then have one week in which to research (if needed) and write an answer limited to no more than three words, to be sent to the NCS during the following Friday's QT Net.

We'll start off with simple questions needing only short answers.

Depending on feedback from participants, compound questions and even formal traffic may be offered in the future probably at a different venue after everyone has gained some experience.

Four Basic rules:

1. For consistency, the Net Control Station (NCS) VK2FDU will open the QT Net every week at the same time. (1050Z first week, 1045Z each subsequent Friday)
2. Answers, starting on the second Friday, will consist of between one and three words, this stipulation because of the limited time available to the net.
3. QSZ will be used by default (i.e. each word will be sent twice). This may seem time consuming but the strategy should avoid most repeat requests which can be a lot more wasteful.
4. All rules are subject to modification as deemed appropriate.

The first week: 9th June 2023

Zoom Session at 1030Z (2030 AEST, 2230 NZT)

The Zoom session will introduce attendees to the concepts and protocols of FDU's QT Net. We'll run through an example and answer any questions.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81381487386?pwd=N3dwK2ZVSIN6SVFoc2g5WWdrazRIQT09>

Passcode is 138505

The first question will be sent at 1050Z

When VK2FDU comes on the air at 1050Z it will be using accepted net control protocol so that participants know exactly what's happening at all times. (Explanations of Q-codes and prosigns are shown below in parenthesis)

NCS opens the net by sending:

VVV VVV VVV CQ CQ CQ FDU QND QNZ DE VK2FDU VK2FDU =

(QND - the net is now controlled; QNZ - zero beat to my frequency; = is the prosign BT)

**QNC CT NR1 NR1 = NAME NAME SETTLEMENT SETTLEMENT FOUNDED
FOUNDED 1788 1788 AT AT BOTANY BOTANY BAY BAY QUERY QUERY =
ANY FILLS? BK**

What are FILLS? Requesting a FILL means you send your 'sine' (see definition on Page 3). After acknowledgement of your 'sine' by the NCS, define the word you want repeated using one of the prosigns: WA (word after); WB (word before); BN (words between); AA (all after) or AB (all before). This is good training for 'thinking on the fly'.

If no requests for FILLS are received, NCS closes the QT Net with

= NW QRU QNF 73 DE VK2FDU SK

(QNC - message for all net stations; CT - prosign for 'copy the following'; NR1 - the question's serial number; QRU - I have no further traffic; QNF - the net is now uncontrolled; SK – end of transmission) Where prosigns have an overscore (or in this document are within a box (e.g. CT)) the letters are concatenated, i.e. sent together without a space. Without an overscore, letters are sent separately.

The question will take approximately 2 minutes, 30 seconds to send at 15 wpm.

It will be sent first at 1050Z on 40 metres (7.028 MHz +/-) and then again at 1055Z on 80 metres (3.528 MHz +/-).

We hope that by transmitting the question on both 40 and 80 metres we'll get full coverage across VK and ZL.

When sending in your logs, please give a signal report for VK2FDU on both 40 and 80 metres. This will enable us to better understand propagation and which band is most suited to net activities.

FDU QSO Party then commences as near as possible to 1100Z

Feel welcome to practice conversational skills or any other aspects of CW. Most of all, have fun.

Please QRS as required.

The second and subsequent weeks:

The QT Net will commence at **1045Z** to allow a little extra time for answers.

VK2FDU opens the net by sending:

VVV VVV VVV CQ CQ CQ FDU QND QNZ DE VK2FDU VK2FDU =

NCS then sends **QNC CT** and the next consecutive serial number along with that night's question, after which NCS will invite answers to the previous week's question by sending:

= DE VK2FDU = QRU? (QRU? - have you any messages for me?)

That is the signal for stations wanting to send an answer to ID with their 'sine'.

*What is a 'sine'?

A 'sine' is a shorthand call sign consisting of two letters from the suffix of one's full call sign.

Reason? Answers to the previous week's question need to be streamlined or the process could take a long time. Hence the use of 'sines'. For our purpose we will use the last two letters of the suffix, e.g. VK1AAF would send **AF**, or ZL3TK would send **TK**. This technique eliminates time-wasting, formal check-ins, and the possibility of confusion from overlapping full call signs at answer time.

NCS will reply to only one 'sine' at a time, e.g. **AF** (and send nothing else, he is waiting for AF)

The chosen station (VK1AAF) responds with:

DE VK1AAF = REPLY TO NR1 SYDNEY SYDNEY = BTN (BTN - back to net)

NCS acknowledges with **TU DE VK2FDU = QRU?**

That is the signal for the next 'sine' or series of 'sines'. NCS replies to another 'sine' and the cycle repeats until no further 'sines' are heard. When there are no further 'sines', NCS sends

= TNX TO ALL NW QRU QNF DE VK2FDU SK

FDU QSO Party then commences as near as possible to 1100Z

Feel welcome to practice conversational skills or any other aspects of CW. Most of all, have fun.

Please QRS as required.

Any questions? Pls email Chris vk3qb(at)hotmail.com

<https://www.fdu.org.au/question-time-net/>

Cover story – Chris VK1CT's QCX Mini for the Great Outdoors



Not much bigger than a deck of playing cards, the 'QCX mini' is a CW-only single-band QRP transceiver and packed with features. It only draws around 80mA on receive, so it's economical to run and you don't need to lug heavy batteries to power it when out portable. It's simple to use and has two dials, one for volume and the other for tuning. Adjusting keyer speed and accessing the menu is done via two micro pushbutton switches. The LCD display is backlit, which can be turned on or off.



As it has no internal speaker, an external speaker or headphones need to be plugged into the 3.5mm audio socket. I use an external speaker which is powered by an internal battery and is recharged via USB. With external dimensions of approximately 11 x 9 x 18cm the Lowepro CS40 case is ideal for transporting the radio, battery, key, speaker, small notepad, and pen. I use three 18650 rechargeable cells with a 3500mAh rating to power the rig. The Pico Paddle from Palm Radio (sadly no longer in business) is a perfect companion. The total weight of all this gear, including the case, is 640 grams.

I've used my QCX mini radios for several WWFF (World Wide Flora and Fauna) park activations. On my latest expedition I combined bike riding with radio by cycling to a nearby nature reserve. Among the contacts I made that day was Ben VK2JA (FDU newsletter editor) and he encouraged me to pen this article.

I prefer to use end-fed antennas when portable, as I find them easier to deploy than a dipole. However, the QCX mini gets a bit upset with this arrangement. Inserting a choke seems to have solved the stray RF problem.



The radio is available either as a kit or as an assembled unit, with the latter costing more. I have built three QCX mini radios (40, 30 and 20m) as well as the larger QCX+ model for 80m. The construction manual is well-written, has colour diagrams and circuit board photos, and a detailed section on troubleshooting. Assembling the various pieces into the enclosure requires care and patience, as there isn't much room for error.

Designed and sold by Hans Summers G0UPL, the QCX mini is available for sale on the QRP Labs website: <http://shop.qrp-labs.com/>. The kit version is \$57.79 USD, which is about \$88 AUD. Optional extras include a metal enclosure and an AGC module. If you prefer to run more power, a 50-watt amplifier kit is also available. I have built two of the amplifiers and they seem to work well. They require a power supply of around 19 volts though to get close to 50 watts output.



If you're after a small, low-cost radio, get yourself a QCX mini. If you build the kit version, your soldering skills will get a workout and you'll feel an extra sense of achievement when you start making contacts with it.

Photo notes:

My choke balun which keeps the radio happy when coupled to an end-fed antenna

The band label does not come with the rig. I put the label on because I have multiple QCX mini radios

All packed inside the Lowepro CS40 case and ready to take portable



Chris VK1CT

NZ news and NZ CW net

The NZ net is on 3535.0 kHz at 9pm NZT Mon-Fri

[Read the latest edition of the NZ Net Newsletter](#)

NZ Net News is the fortnightly newsletter of the New Zealand Net.

If you would like to subscribe, please [contact ZL1NZ](#).

<https://zl1.nz/about-amateur-radio/new-zealand-nets/nz-net/>

Suffering QRM/RFI? Check out www.qrm.guru for hint n tips, case studies, education, and on-line support.



That's a wrap 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, to Ben VK2JA – newsletter editor – [bmcosier\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:bmcosier(at)gmail.com)

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

Chris VK3QB, Derek VK3KX, Phil VK3VB, Graeme VK5GG
es Philip ZL1PSH

June 2023