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July 16, 2017

Brisbane Area WICEN Group
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Dear all members of Brisbane Area WICEN Group,

For a number of years now, the Brisbane Area WICEN Group has been meeting at the Kelvin Grove State College on a regular basis. As a place to hold business meetings, the venue has served us well.

The only time in recent history we have been let down was when the demountables, in which we were meeting, were demolished unexpectedly. To the school's credit, they were able to find us an alternate classroom in which for us to meet.

The venue is fairly central to most of the membership, and to my knowledge, there is no fee requested by the school for the use of their facilities.

In many ways, this is a good system, however it does come with some limitations:

Firstly, we *only* have use of the venue on *one* night each month: the third Monday of the month, with other times by special arrangement.

Secondly, the alarm system is configured to arm itself automatically at 10:00PM, we must have vacated the building by this time.

Thirdly, there is neither an area in which we can store work-in-progress projects or equipment used by the group, nor an area where any equipment may be permanently installed.

Finally, we only have permission to conduct business meetings in the classroom. To the best of my knowledge, written permission for use of a classroom for any other purpose has never been sought.

Given the nature of the room concerned, I would not rate the probability of such permission being granted as being very high, irrespective of what proposed precautions we took to ensure school property was not damaged.

If we decide to hold training sessions or examinations, it is theoretically possible to organise to book the classroom on another evening, but again, we are limited in the length of time in which we may make use of the facility. Thus there is a limitation to the amount of material that may be covered by sheer virtue that there is an effective curfew placed upon us by the alarm system.

It is also a fact that, as a group, we have a declining membership and increasing issues regarding funding.

In order to attract members, it is my opinion that we need to be doing more than just holding meetings. Our community involvement with activities such as the emergency communications exercises in which we assist are one aspect of this.

To put it simply, we need to be where the people are, and more critically, we need to be where *like minded* people are, as these are the people of whom are most likely to take up an amateur radio license and join us.

It also helps in the word-of-mouth advertising, it gets our name into the minds of people who partake in the sorts of events we historically assist with, which means they are more likely to approach us when seeking a group to handle communications traffic.

The Radiocommunications (Interpretation) Determination 2015, gives this definition of the amateur radio service:

amateur service means a radiocommunications service for self-training in radiocommunications, intercommunication using radiocommunications, and technical investigation into radiocommunications, by persons:

- (a) who are licensed under the Act to do so; and
- (b) who do so solely with a personal aim; and
- (c) who have no pecuniary interest in the outcome of the operation of the service.

The phrases “for self-training in radiocommunications” and “technical investigation into radiocommunications” are the key phrases here. By definition, amateur radio is an *experimental* exercise, and points (b) and (c) characterise it

as a hobby.

The fact we can use our skills to help relay welfare information during an event is an incidental side-effect.

The sole purpose of the amateur radio service, is to investigate and learn. Many of today's communications systems, owe themselves, to experiments conducted by amateur radio operators.

In the past, due to the sheer expense in obtaining purpose-built equipment off-the-shelf, this has also meant a certain amount of re-purposing of equipment intended for other purposes. One example is the repeater sites operated by Brisbane Area WICEN Group. Many of these are being replaced by "proper" repeaters now, but it has been quite dated ex-commercial mobile transceivers at those sites for some time.

Another would be the wide and varied forms of antenna and masts that people use, both permanent and temporary. Ever seen a "squid pole" being used as an antenna mast? Yours truly is guilty-as-charged, and proudly so.

The 1200 baud AFSK packet radio system we all know from IROQ and other events? Have a think about why it gets called "Bell 202 modulation". The fact that both AX.25 and the Bell 202 modem use the same signalling techniques is no co-incidence or accident.

In that essence, it is this nature to take what is readily available, and re-purpose those components for other tasks is ingrained in amateur radio's DNA. It is what got us here, and it is the vehicle in which many of us carry out our "technical investigations into radiocommunications", as expected of us under The Act.

It is for this reason, a move of venue has been proposed. Enter, Brisbane Hackerspace.

Now, the term *hacker* here has little to do with breaking into other peoples' computer networks. The term *hack* is defined in the Macquarie Dictionary as:

verb: to cut, notch, or chop irregularly

This definition comes out of woodworking and similar pursuits, but the verb is regularly applied elsewhere. One might consider someone taking an old Bell 202 modem they had lying around, and *hacking* the telephone interface circuitry so that they could connect the modem up to their radio transceiver: one could imagine that this was not a delicate process.

In that essence, there is a direct synergy between their activities and ours.

The term *hacker*, is being used to describe the individual who undertakes such modifications to equipment they own, for whatever personal project they may be working on. The term *hackerspace* implying this is a *location* in which such activities take place. The terms *maker* and *makerspace* have been similarly used to describe the same people and places.

Brisbane Hackerspace has been around for 7 years now. The aim of the group is to provide a location in which people can work on various personal projects and share in the use of equipment. Equipment such as reasonable-grade oscilloscopes, reflow ovens, 3D printers, laser cutters, lathes (woodworking and metal), CNC machinery, and more, they've got.

Hackerspace members simply need to be inducted in the use of said machinery before they are permitted to use it.

In addition to the above, they also have a meeting room in which meetings or training courses may be held.

From the point of view of Brisbane Area WICEN Group, holding our meetings here would have a number of advantages:

1. The venue is well serviced by ferry and bus services with ample parking, thus easy for members to get to.
2. In holding our meetings there, it provides exposure of the group to people who hold an interest in the electronics field and who may be interested in taking out a radio license.
3. There is the potential for Brisbane Area WICEN Group to set up a permanent radio station, for the use of all members of Brisbane Area WICEN Group.
4. With the approval of their land-lord, we may be able to house a container for storage of Brisbane Area WICEN Group's equipment.

The only thing they ask in return:

1. When holding meetings, one of the people present at the meeting must be a member of Brisbane Hackerspace. (Ideally, they should be a member of both groups.)
2. When using the facilities for running workshops or training courses, they ask for a 10% cut of the proceeds.

For the above, we would have a site in which we can have access to on any day or night of the week for the purpose

of holding meetings and potentially for a radio station and storage area.

Brisbane Area WICEN Group members who simply wish to make use of facilities at the site owned by Brisbane Area WICEN Group itself or attend meetings held at Brisbane Hackerspace, do not need to be a member of Brisbane Hackerspace, such dual-membership is *optional* (but greatly appreciated by both sides).

A couple of members of Brisbane Area WICEN Group have already expressed an interest in joining up with Brisbane Hackerspace (yours truly included), which will help fulfill our dual-member requirements.

There has also been interest expressed in Brisbane Area WICEN Group's presence there. Thus we may gain a few members as a result of setting-up shop at Brisbane Hackerspace. Many of the members there are of a younger demographic: something our hobby is in bad need of.

In the event that we wish to run a workshop which involves the use of Brisbane Hackerspace equipment, *only* on these occasions, would those participating in the workshop need to be members of both organisations. For such occasions, they offer single-month memberships starting at \$30, which would give the temporary dual-members, full access for that month.

The first downside to the move is that it is about 15 minutes drive from our present meeting place. Kingsford-Smith Drive is undergoing road works, however in the last few times that we have visited (once on a Saturday, and twice on Tuesday evenings), we have experienced minimal in the way of traffic issues.

For members who live north of Brisbane and/or have access to the Gateway Motorway, the proposed venue is actually easier to get to. There are two members who'd be significantly inconvenienced by such a move, one of whom presently walks to our current venue (thus would need to be picked up en-route) and myself when I cycle.

The second downside to this venue is that it is in a low-lying area, and in the event of heavy rain such as was experienced in 2011, the area *will* flood. This does not happen often, thus the risk is minimal.

Brisbane Hackerspace have moved around over the years, but have been at their present site for about 5 years. The area is undergoing active development, and they have been informed by their land-lord that their patch is the *last* to be developed. Plans of development in that particular spot are some 5 years or more away, and have been pushed back several times before.

In the event that this does happen, it actually helps the cases of both groups in that Brisbane Area WICEN Group, through its support of community events, addresses a "community need", which is a stated requirement in the lease agreement between the land-lord and Brisbane Hackerspace.

We would be one of a few groups sharing the site at 221C MacArthur Ave, Eagle Farm.

I put forward the above proposed venue, and invite you to have a look at the place during one of their open nights (every Tuesday evening) or on an open day (check <http://www.hsbne.org> for details).

Yours Faithfully,

Stuart Longland