

REGIONAL AIRSPACE AND PROCEDURES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RAPAC – National	OUT OF SESSION
PAPER FOR DISTRIBUTION	13 March 2020

TITLE	VMC requirement on a Visual Departure
SUBMITTED BY	Airservices Australia (stakeholder@airservicesaustralia.com)
PURPOSE	To seek feedback on the proposal to change the requirement for VMC below the LSALT on a visual departure to being ‘visual’ below the LSALT
KEY ISSUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current rule requires an aircraft on a visual departure to maintain VMC below the LSALT It makes little sense to require VMC (cloud base up to 1000FT above the aircraft) when one foot below the LSALT, but at the LSALT flight in IMC is safe.
ATTACHMENTS	Nil

BACKGROUND

Previous iterations of the AIP and Manual of Air Traffic Services (MATS) have permitted ATC to offer a visual departure when the cloud base was above the applicable LSALT (MVA/MSA/LSALT). This was subsequently amended to require the departing aircraft to be in VMC up to the applicable LSALT. This requirement has an operational impact on ATC issuance of the visual departure, as the cloud is required to be 500/1000FT above the applicable LSALT depending on the class of airspace.

Example: Class C tower. 25NM MSA is 2900FT. A visual departure can only be offered when the cloud base is 3900FT or higher.

While AIP ENR 1.1 para 2.5 specifically states that ‘By day in VMC, the pilot of an IFR flight may request a visual departure’, the subsequent sub-para states ‘When an IFR aircraft is issued heading instructions and/or required to maintain a level below the MVA or MSA/LSALT during a visual departure, “VISUAL” will be appended to the departure instruction. By definition, flight at the MVA/MSA/LSALT is inherently safe.

Visual approach procedures do not have the requirement for VMC to exist at the MSA/LSALT to allow the approach to commence, and assign terrain clearance to the pilot with only 5000m visibility, clear of cloud and in sight of ground or water.

AIP ENR 1.1

2.11.3 Visual Approach

2.11.3.1 ATC Authorisation. Except as detailed in *para 2.11.3.2*, the criteria under which visual approaches may be authorised by ATC are as follows:

a. For an IFR flight:

(1) By day when:

- the aircraft is within 30NM of the aerodrome; and
- the pilot has established and can continue flight to the aerodrome with continuous visual reference to the ground or water; and
- visibility along the flight path is not less than 5,000M, or for helicopters 800M, or the aerodrome is in sight.

The use of a visual departure is strictly an ATC procedure in controlled airspace, where IFR traffic will be separated from other IFR traffic and separated from or given traffic information on VFR traffic depending on airspace classification.

PREVIOUS AIP ENTRY:

AIP Australia OPS 20JUN96 CTL-3

14.15.6 Should a pilot in command request a visual departure, the cloud base must be above the MSA/LSALT for the particular route, or if the intended cruising level is lower, the cloud base must be such as to permit flight in VMC. When ATC offers a visual departure, the cloud base must be above the MVA (radar environment) or the MSA/LSALT (non-radar environment).

PROPOSED AIP AMENDMENT

ENR1.1 GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

2.5 **Visual Departure - IFR Flights**

2.5.1 By day, the pilot of an IFR flight may request a visual departure, or ATC may issue a visual departure.

2.5.2 **ATC Responsibilities**

2.5.2.1 ATC will only issue a visual departure to an IFR flight when the cloud base is above the MVA (ATS surveillance services) or the MSA/LSALT.

2.5.2.2 When an IFR aircraft is issued heading instructions and/or required to maintain a level below the MVA or MSA/LSALT during a visual departure, "VISUAL" will be appended to the departure instruction.

2.5.3 **Pilot Responsibilities**

2.5.3.1 A pilot of an IFR flight may only request a visual departure when the cloud base will allow the pilot to maintain terrain clearance visually below the MSA/LSALT applicable to the departure. Additionally, if the intended cruising level is lower than route LSALT, the cloud base must permit flight in VMC at that level.

2.5.3.2 During the conduct of a visual departure, a pilot must:
a. maintain the track(s)/heading(s) authorised by ATC;
b. remain not less than 500FT above the lower limit of the CTA; and
c. visually maintain obstacle clearance.

ENR 1.5 HOLDING, APPROACH AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

8.2.12 By day, when conditions permit the pilot to maintain terrain clearance visually below the applicable LSALT, the pilot may request, or ATC may offer a visual departure.

ENR 1.6 ATS SURVEILLANCE SERVICES AND PROCEDURES

3.9 Before takeoff, ATC may assign a heading for a departing aircraft to assume after takeoff, followed by frequency change instructions if appropriate. Headings, other than those assigned for a radar SID, will only be issued for a visual departure by day.

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

Feedback on this proposal can be provided via the Airservices Engage Hub at:

<https://engage.airservicesaustralia.com/vmc-visual-departures>