Rules and checklist for the selection of designators and suffixes

When assessing the suitability of two-letter (2LD) domestic, three-letter (3LD) international and the associated telephony designators, Airservices primarily applies the 'Rules for the Registration of or Change in Designators' detailed in ICAO Doc 8585 'Designators for Aircraft Operating Agencies, Aeronautical Authorities and Services'. The following is a summary of the rules Airservices applies (tick boxes as applicable).

Choose a two or three-letter designator that:

☐ is distinct and dissimilar from any other designators used by other operators in the intended area of operation;

☐ reflects to the maximum extent practicable, the name of the aircraft operating agency or its telephony designator; and

☐ does not include the following combinations of letters:

- o CZ and ZC; and
- o NN, PAN, SOS, QTA, SVC, Y**, ZAA to ZIZ, ZOA to ZUZ, ZYA to ZZY.

Choose a telephony designator that:

☐ ideally resembles the name of the aircraft operating agency or its function, and be distinct and dissimilar from any other telephony designators in Doc 8585;

☐ ideally correlates with the 2LD or 3LD, the telephony designator and the name of the aircraft operating agency or its function;

☐ ideally comprises of one word of two or three syllables and does not exceed two words;

☐ does not comprise of the phonetic form of the two or three-letter designator (e.g. 'KLM' would no longer be permitted); and

☐ is easily pronounceable.

Flight number suffixes

Flight number suffixes are the combination of numbers and letters that follow designators. Guidance on the selection of suffixes can be found in the AIP Book at GEN 3.4 – 20, section 5.15 and includes that suffixes should avoid:

- ending in 'zero' or 'five' to avoid confusion with headings;
- numbers that resemble altitudes or flight levels (e.g. 3000, 500, 350, etc.);
- emergency codes (e.g. 7600, 7700, etc.);
- numerical aircraft types (e.g. 737, 330, etc.); and
- for two-letter designators, using '1', '0' and '5' as the first number in the suffix (as they are easily mistaken for numbers).

ICAO Doc 8585 provides the following additional recommendations:

- Flight numbers should be kept as short as possible and usually be limited to three figures; and
- Flight numbers should be selected bearing in mind the flight numbers already in use by other operating agencies in the intended area of operation.

Finally, operators should:

- avoid similar sounding and similar looking suffixes within their own fleet (e.g number combinations such as 223 and 233);
- consider using a letter on the end of the suffix; and
- avoid letters that look similar to numbers (e.g. 0 and O, 1 and I, 3 and B, 4 and A etc.).