Climb & Descent

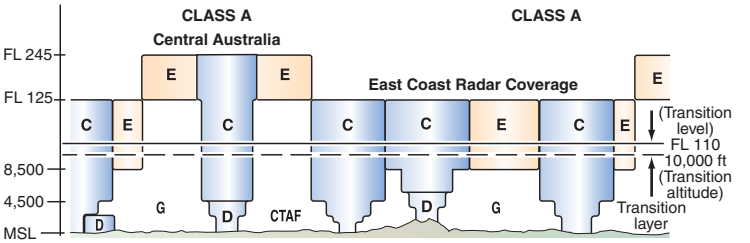
Class A airspace covers all of Australia above FL245. Over Eastern Australia, where radar coverage exists, Class A steps down to a lower limit of FL180. VFR flights are not permitted to fly in Class A airspace.

Immediately beneath Class A airspace, will be either Class E or Class C airspace. Generally, over South-eastern Australia, Class C airspace lies between FL125 and the lower limit of Class A at FL180. Elsewhere, Class E airspace exists from a lower limit of 8,500 ft or FL125 all the way up to the lower limit of Class A.

If you intend to fly anywhere in Eastern Australia between Cooktown in Queensland and west of Adelaide, you should be careful to study the charts to determine the extent of Class E and C airspace. Above Class D control zones, lies Class E or C airspace. You will need to obtain an airways clearance to fly through these areas when they are active. In addition, you will need to have a transponder squawking ALT, and you must have two-way VHF COM with ATS. If you are operating IFR in Class E airspace, unless operating under a general exemption, your aircraft should be equipped with a transponder squawking Code 3000 (unless participating in RIS), mode C and you should have VHF COM tuned to the appropriate ATC frequency. The transponder requirement applies even when you are outside radar coverage since you will then be visible to TCAS-equipped IFR aircraft.

In Class D airspace, you will also be required to have a transponder on, if fitted, for the same reasons. However, you must have a clearance from the responsible control tower to operate in Class D zones and adjacent Class D steps.

North of Sydney, Class C airspace is generally surrounded by Class E and is capped by Class A above FL180. Class D is capped by Class C up to FL180 or FL245. Above FL180, there is a layer of either Class A or Class E airspace up to FL245 – above which there is a total cover of the whole of the Australian continent by Class A.



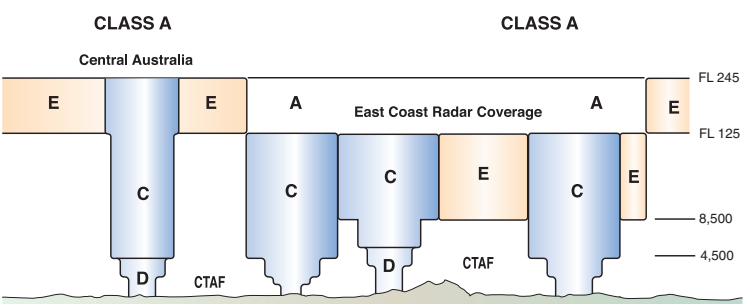
Below 10,000 feet:

clearance and two-way communications with ATC required to enter Class C and D
transponder mandatory in Class C and E
transponder on in Class D and G (if fitted)
radio mandatory for CERT or MIL
landing lights on please
VMC criteria apply

Transit Airspace

Class A

Class A offers a high altitude corridor for Air Transport transit between capital cities and to allow climb and descent into and out of Class C. Class A is only available to IFR flights and requires a clearance, transponder and VHF COM. Class A covers the whole of Australia above FL245. The space between FL125 and FL245 is either Class E or A. Class A is IFR only and is effectively irrelevant to most GA operations.



Note: There are no defined volumes of airspace associated with non-towered aerodromes (CTAF).

Class B

There is no Class B airspace over Australia.

Class C

Most of the capital cities along with three major cities on the Queensland coast have airports surrounded by Class C control zones and associated control area steps which extend up to FL180. South of Sydney and connecting the steps associated with Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney, there is also Class C airspace from FL125 up to FL180. Nearly all Class C control zones operate continuously. The exceptions are Townsville and Gold Coast. Townsville (being essentially a military aerodrome) closes at night. Gold Coast is open in accordance with current NOTAM. In both cases, when the tower is closed, their respective control zones become CTAF (located in Class G airspace).

Class D

Class D applies to major country aerodromes, Hobart and now, all capital city GA aerodromes. Class D airspace over regional aerodromes generally extends up to 4,500 ft. There are no Class D corridors. Class D requires a clearance for all aircraft, so two-way comms with the control tower is necessary. A transponder, although advisable, is not mandatory. If you are VFR and have one, it must be on and be squawking code 3000 ALT.

Class E

Class E airspace is en-route airspace which is controlled for IFR aircraft but uncontrolled for VFR. Generally Class E airspace will be above 8,500 ft in Australia. However, Avalon (YMAV) in Victoria is a notable exception. (Avalon has Class E airspace surrounding the Class D, up to 4,500ft.). Except in Eastern Australia where the level of traffic makes it worthwhile to have Class E down to 8,500 ft, over the rest of the country, Class E doesn't commence until FL125. In South-eastern Australia, where Class C corridors exist, Class E applies only between 8,500 ft and FL125. North of Sydney within radar coverage, Class E airspace extends from 8,500 ft up to FL125. There are five sets of Class C control zones and steps, all of them in Queensland, that are surrounded by Class E airspace above 8,500 ft.

There are corridors of Class E airspace to cater for a moderate number of commuter flights operated by high performance turbo-prop aircraft. These extend from Sydney to Dubbo and from Melbourne to Mildura, having a lower limit of FL125 and extending up to FL180. In addition, there is Class E airspace from FL125 over Bass Strait and Tasmania.

Class F

There is no Class F airspace over Australia.

Class G

Class G airspace covers the vast majority of Australia. Class G houses Class D and CTAF aerodromes. Class G extends from surface level to Class E and so may extend to 8,500 feet or FL180, depending on location. For flights at and above 10,000 feet, a transponder is mandatory in any and all airspace, and above 5,000 feet, a radio is required for VFR tuned to the appropriate frequency.

VFR Flight by IFR Flights in Class E Airspace

A series of special procedures became necessary as the result of the introduction of Class E airspace. This is because of the fact that IFR flights are operating in controlled airspace and sharing it with VFR flights that are operating outside controlled airspace. These are described in the following.

VFR Climb/Descent

This procedure is only available to IFR aircraft operating in Class D or E airspace. The aim of it is to permit an IFR flight to conduct a VFR climb or a VFR descent in VMC in circumstances when existing IFR traffic would delay such a climb being approved by ATC in IMC. Since there are now no Class E steps above Class D airspace, a VFR climb in these circumstances would not be feasible. If you were conducting an IFR flight in fine weather and were cruising in Class E airspace, you might conceivably consider a 'VFR Descent' while still inside Class E airspace, but unless you obtained a clearance to enter the Class C steps associated with your destination, you would be contemplating descending into Class G airspace and hence losing the protection of remaining inside controlled airspace!