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Airlines of Tasmania, notes the recent invitation for submissions to a National Aviation Policy Green Paper.

As a provider of low capacity scheduled airline services, charter and important aerial work programs throughout Australia, the Pacific Rim and Asia, our company owns and operates Cambridge Airport, and is aware of the significant problems confronting our section of the industry.

In business for over thirty years, holding an ATPL license with 17,000 and over 40 years flying experience, I have had management experience for most of this time.

AIRCRAFT

Many of the manufacturers of GA aircraft have ceased manufacturing many of the more popular types and currently, there is limited access to nine passenger twin engine models. Turbine replacements have a capital cost that precludes them from the majority of GA operations.

As a result the popular PA31 Navajo Chieftain and Cessna 400 series are staying in service beyond what would normally be their economic life. CASA has had a (non-published) policy position over the past several years, to encourage the use of multi crew turbine aircraft for scheduled airline services (RPT).

Most operators would agree that correctly operated two pilot turbine operations is the safest mode of transport that should be provided for RPT and agree with the CASA agenda.

Amending company structure, financial obligations and ensuring capacity will support these aircraft types with double the capacity, requires confidence in the market and a belief support from local government will follow the introduction.

These aircraft are expensive and require changes to pilot training and engineering standards. CASA quite correctly insist on a high standard for flight crews and adherence to maintenance procedures.

To proceed along this path needs the confidence of a reasonable return on capital and the possibility an expanding business base. In the current climate it would be financially foolish to embark on this course.



For those already committed it is a question of continuing or selling their aviation assets for a more relaxing business environment outside aviation.

AIRCREW

Appropriately trained pilots are an essential requirement for safe operations. Training is both time consuming and expensive.

For reasons not difficult to understand, the majority of pilots joining our company are ill equipped to carry out normal flying duties. Recently two instrument-rated commercial pilots, both with multi engine endorsements, joined our company.

They required extensive training to reach our required standard. One needed over 40 hours of dual training to be endorsed on a new type and be considered safe, the other, several weeks of training.

Previous pilots have gone through similar difficulties where, even after satisfactory standards are met, we must continually monitor their application to the tasks they are to undertake.

Needless to say we are both frustrated and saddened when they reach our required standard and savagely recruited by the major airlines in an almost contemptuous manner.

The majors treat GA as a supplier of raw materials and expect to walk away from the mine with a 'gung ho' attitude as if it was their birthright.

CASA admit to this problem but suggest there is little they can do. Suffice to say CASA insist our pilots maintain the highest standard and acknowledge the problem of the extraordinary training costs.

AVIATION SECURITY

Having outlined the serious financial hurdles facing GA one has difficulty understanding the reasons behind the rise and rise of DOTARS. Their exponential growth in the name of protecting us from a terrorist attack, is misguided.

Does anyone really believe Flinders Island requires high level security? Or putting a ¼ inch chain around a nose wheel would prevent the aircraft being stolen.

On arriving back at Hobart Airport on a late evening Jetstar flight, I was met by no lesser than four (4) well armed police carefully scrutinising the arriving passengers. At the same time, I believe there were three state police patrols for the whole of Hobart.

I appreciate the separation of Federal and State responsibilities. I am similarly aware of our countries limited resources and need for concentrating these resources in more essential roles.

It should be noted in recent years there has never been a death from a terrorist in Australia. Whereas it is estimated up to 30 people per day (3000 pa) die in our hospitals because of poor practises and mistreatment.

Can anyone even dream of the reaction if thirty people died as a result of a terrorist attack, let alone every thirty every day. Politicians of all persuasions have decided to allow the people of Australia to lose many freedoms and be subjected to inconvenience because of non-existent threats.

Few would argue about security at major airports for reasons apart from, but including, terrorism. Most appreciate we have international obligations in the fight against the movement of criminals, drugs and extremists.

However, can someone in DOTARS can explain why our passengers on an RPT flight into Moorabbin needed to walk, in all weathers, a distance across the tarmac when an identical plane can park next to the terminal if it is charter category.

Apart from struggling across the aircraft movement area, baggage often gets wet on the open trolleys, because of the distance. We chose to leave Moorabbin and position to Essendon because of security requirements and restrictions on positioning equipment and baggage.

Authorities must realise there is no way we can protect people from a determined and evil person who decides to embark on a mission of hate. Do we close all the weekend markets? Do we stop all gatherings and sports meetings?

Does anyone truly believe a person intent on creating mayhem, could not think up a myriad methods to achieve this aim, in any society where people assemble. Fuel tankers abound and the average utility can carry more payload than most light aircraft - and most people drive.

There is a need for an educated public willing to question the unusual.

However, the most important resource in combating this insidious evil is the need for high level intelligence gathering.

I am confident four officers standing around a single aircraft arrival at 10pm in Hobart, could be utilised in more productive tasks.

SUMMARY

The ever increasing costs of aviation fuel, airport landing charges and other escalating costs, requires increased passenger fares. This in turn has the well proven effect of decreasing passenger numbers and a subsequent decrease in gross revenue.

The airlines pirate our pilots and we need to service the smaller populations of rural Australia, often to isolated communities.

Licensed aircraft engineers (LAME's) are becoming an endangered species where I understand the average age is well over fifty.

There is a need for a high level recruitment program, encouraging overseas engineers to migrate to Australia. The support by the airworthiness division of CASA would be essential.

The major airlines have an obligation to give support to the organisations who have trained the majority of their pilots. There is, I understand, a limited assistance program where some companies and the airlines where there is an arrangement for training. This should be progressed and made more formal.

State governments should be encouraged to support isolated airports with their funding. I find it amazing that our company is by far the major user of Flinders Island Airport (perhaps 40 to 1) yet we are charged more to land our passengers than a charter operator.

Expecting a community of 900 people to support the airport previously owned by the Federal Government is unfair. The airport, as the only means of public transport, should be given special status as does the subsidised public bus services in the cities.

A lessening of the charges would reduce overheads and be passed on to encourage traffic. Isolated airports have the same problem of a diminishing market and a need to pass on the increased costs to a limited number of operators.

Surely there must be a realisation small aircraft are not attractive to terrorists. On recent visits to the USA I noted comments from smaller aerodrome operators that security was not a priority as they only operated 20 passenger aircraft.

The Canadian border airport at Calgary has a tower and a number of 19 passenger turbine operations. My questioning of their security arrangements was answered with surprise as they said - we don't operate B737's or similar aircraft and therefore there are no special requirements.

At North Las Vegas, apart from company security for public risk protection and the standard need to secure valuable assets from theft, there is no specific terrorist protection policy and ID cards are simply company driven.



Again this busy airport bases its policy on aircraft capacity. Indeed the capacity of the busses used to ferry passengers from the city is greater than the aircraft.

Public opinion would prevent the motor car from being invented in today's world. Outcry against thousands dying as a result of accidents would have our political leaders avoiding the decision.

The threat of a terrorist attack has had the same result, with all political parties seeking the high moral ground and scoring points against their opposition. The travelling public need to accept the reality of life's risks, where there can be no guarantees.

Destroying freedoms does no favours for our country. Indeed it is a victory for our enemies.

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