



Australian Air League

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Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Govt.,
GPO Box 594,
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A.C.T.

25th May, 2008.

Subject: Aviation Industry Submission/ General Aviation.

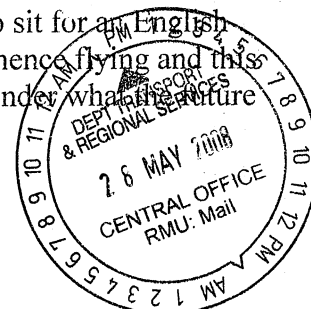
Background.

The Australian Air League is a volunteer Youth Organisation whose prime aim is to encourage the young people of Australia to develop an interest in aviation either as a Hobby or preferably as a Career. With this in mind, for the past 28 years we have run an Air Activities Centre at Camden Airport staffed fully by volunteers mainly from the Aviation Industry which holds both an Air Operators Certificate for Flying Training, Airwork and Charter Operations and a Maintenance Approval to maintain it's aircraft, a very unique operation within Australia. The Centre operates four aircraft, two Cessna 152 Training Aircraft, a PA-28 Piper Warrior for Navigation Training and Air Experience Flights for young members and a Van's RV-6 (which was built by the members of the Centre) for advanced flying operations.

As spokesperson on Aviation matters for the Organisation, I have a background of employment in the Aviation Industry (Engineering) with the Airlines for the past 53 years, have been involved in general aviation as a Licenced Aircraft Maintenance Engineer with the AAL for the past 28 years plus a Private Pilot Licence holder for the past 18 years.

Reasons Why Pilots Are Not Renewing Their Licences.

Cost: Since "Cost Recovery" for the Aviation Industry was introduced by the former Liberal Government we have been subjected to a series of spiraling costs for all services from Licence Applications, Security Passes, Examination Fees, Air Services Charges, Licence Renewals etc. All of these have been well above that expected for the service delivered. Fuel Costs have also risen dramatically which has had a "flow on" effect to aircraft hiring charges. "Centralization" of these activities to CASA Canberra Office instead of the Regional Offices has lead to excessive Delays in processing Applications and Approvals as the mail and phone has replaced the "face to face" method of doing business. As new Student Pilots can't fly more than 3 hours instruction without a Student Pilot Licence this has caused serious "hassles" as it not uncommon for the issue of a Student Pilot Licence from Canberra to take Months. It is almost an insult to ask Students from South Africa and India to sit for an English Language test. Students are at their keenest when they first commence flying and this hassle to obtain a Licence puts them right off aviation as they wonder what the future holds if this is the beginning!



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The Flying Schools used to issue Student Pilots Licences on behalf of CASA but this was taken over by Canberra. One wonders at the logic of the person in Canberra who made this decision as the Schools were doing his work for him for nothing, now he has to employ Staff for this role, no wonder costs are rising. I realize that Security now plays a much greater role in our lives but there has to be some common sense also.

Privatization of Airports: With the privatization of Airports came the introduction of Landing Charges (eg: Camden Cessna 152 - \$8.34, Piper Warrior - \$9.23) plus a Ground Parking Charge (eg: Bankstown \$17.00/day). These charges also have to be factored into the aircraft hiring charge. "Big Business" who owns the Airports now works on the principle of when aircraft movements fall you increase the fees to make up for the shortfall in earnings, the "dog chasing it's tail" syndrome.

Licensing Requirements: To hold an Unrestricted Private Pilots Licence you need to undertake a bi-annual flight check which may involve a navigation exercise. Unless you are a relatively frequent user of this facility with it's associated Flight Planning, Radio Procedure changes etc this can become a daunting expensive and time consuming task. Aviation in Australia has changed with the introduction of "Low Cost Carriers" with extensive regional networks. Unless you have a specific requirement, nobody would consider hiring a Cessna to fly to Dubbo anymore, much cheaper with the Airlines and no weather hassles from the Great Divide!

We in General Aviation have been promised for some time a more suitable alternative in the form of a "Recreational Pilots Licence" similar to that successfully introduced in the USA and that adopted by the RAA in Australia. Many Pilots would retain their interest in flying if they could fly within a 100km boundary of their home Airport without the need of Flight Plans etc. To fly from Camden to Albion Park, Nowra , Bankstown ,Bathurst etc for Lunch or a trip down Victor 1 from Bankstown or Camden is all most recreational Pilots wish for!

The Student who passes his GFPT or the holder of the old Restricted Pilots Licence can carry Passengers but is only allowed to fly in the Training Area and not land away from Home Base, so he soon tires of flying over Warragamba Dam and goes to the football instead!

The "dropout rate" of Student Pilots between GFPT and Unrestricted Licence standard is a prime concern to general aviation.

Problems Faced by the Flying Schools.

One needs to consider the following to quickly understand why Flying Schools are closing.

Fleet Replacement: With the cost of a new Cessna 172 or Piper Warrior around \$240,000 plus Insurance, only the very large Flying Schools can afford to amortise such an investment. The end result is that 85% of the Australian Flying School Fleet was manufactured in the 1970's . Just imagine the public outcry if our Taxi Fleet consisted of Austin A40's and FJ Holdens! The costs of maintaining this aging fleet is increasing at an alarming rate.

Instructor Shortage: The rapid expansion of the Airlines has caused them to go hunting for Pilots to fly the huge numbers of new Aircraft they have on order. The Flying School Instructors who trained their future Pilots were the first to be taken on because of their experience and one can't blame them when the wages paid by the Flying Schools are taken into consideration. With very few suitable Flying Instructors left to train the new intakes, the Flying Schools contracted to train large numbers of overseas Student Pilots are offering "incentives" to come and work for them to the detriment of the smaller Flying Schools scattered around the country.

Student Pilot Shortage: Being an Airline Pilot was considered to be a highly paid glamour occupation until the "low cost" Carriers came along. With at that stage a surplus of eager young Commercial Pilots around they were able to negotiate Wage Contracts much below those of Qantas etc. This placed Pilots wages in the same area as Computer IT Technicians, Doctors etc and the glamour of working seven days a week at all hours always away from home wasn't as glamorous as before. There will always be a group of people who love to fly planes but the Airlines will require hundreds of such people. If this trend should continue, one can expect to see Jetstar 787's flown by Indian and Chinese Pilots instead of Aussies!

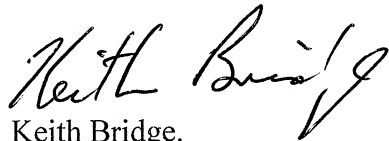
Lack of Airports: Successive Governments have sat on their hands when it comes to approving the construction of new Airports as they are not popular with the voters. The end result is that instead of increasing the number of general aviation Airports around Sydney and other larger cities to cater for the expansion of the city, the opposite has occurred with Airports such as Hoxton Park being sold off for Housing Estates. Even Airports like Bankstown and Canberra have had large portions of their land sold off to Industry other than aviation and Runways considered by experienced Pilots as necessary for safety closed to make way for Commercial expansion. If we don't have Airports to fly from there is no hope of aviation training expanding. Airports like Parafield, Morabbin and Jandakot are now the Centres of Flying Training though even Jandakot is being threatened by the Housing Developers.

Lack of Engineers: Like the Pilots, nothing has been done to attract young people to aircraft engineering as a career. As Australia no longer manufactures advanced aircraft like the FA-18, Degree Engineers, well trained by the Universities have to go overseas to gain a job. The RAAF, once a source of Engineers and Pilots has been bled to the stage it cannot afford to lose any more key personnel. The cadre of LAME's in general aviation is fast approaching retirement age and there are no replacements in sight as higher paid careers are easy to obtain. As a specialist Industry, the Airlines used to be the source of employing large numbers of Apprentices to cover their future requirements but privatization and greedy financial rewards put an end to this planning for the future.

Government Interest: When the Farming Community is threatened by Drought the Government comes to their rescue with low interest loans etc to help them survive. Aviation in Australia has been in a "Drought" situation for many years but Governments, both State and Federal have stood by and done nothing! They perceive that general aviation in particular is a "toy" for the well off and the Airlines places where large sums of money are earned.

Australia with its vast distances needs an effective and prosperous aviation industry to assist the Country to expand into the future.

The only bright light in Australian Aviation is the rapid growth in the Recreational Aviation movement. With self regulation by the RAA and realistic ideals it is a real pattern for the Government and CASA to develop for general aviation in the future before it is too late. The aircraft manufacturers have accepted this new growth of aviation interest and have produced a number of exciting new ultralight aircraft design developments that are as sophisticated as their "bigger brothers". It's possible to gain your RAA Pilot Certificate with just 20 hours of in-flight instruction and we don't hear any cries about unsafe standards. WE have had lots of talking about deregulation of general aviation in a similar manner but CASA seems to be very reluctant to part with a large part of its business.



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