

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL AVIATION ALLIANCE LIMITED
Building 2, Ground Floor, 35-41 Waterloo Rd
Macquarie Park 2113
Tel: 9870 7277 Fax 9870 7299

CITIZENS OF AUSTRALIA

DECLINE IN GENERAL AVIATION

It is important for the Government and the opposition parties to realise that there has been such a decline in General Aviation and that it is detrimental to the fortunes of our nation, that we NEED general aviation for transport and regional development. It is important they realise that some one million voters are affected by and sympathetic to G.A.

I see a need for an overall body, representing ALL the various G.A. Associations to convince the Australian public and hence the politicians and bureaucrats that General Aviation is vital to Australia's National Wellbeing. That it is a vital link in our transport and communications infrastructure.

There seems to be little knowledge and certainly NO policy in any of the tiers of government for the development and promotion of General Aviation.

Most citizens don't even know what G.A. is

No Government Minister, at any level, is an Aviator

Aviation is not part of any Town Planning curriculum at Colleges or Universities

The Aviation Industry is represented by some 20 different Associations, all suffering from the lack of support from a positive Government Policy. They need to get together to press for and help Federal, State and Local Governments develop an overall co-ordinated G.A. policy for the benefit of our nation.

WHAT IS G.A. – GENERAL AVIATION?

Just about every aeronautical activity other than the Regular Air Lines, mostly light aircraft and this includes:-

1. Royal Flying Doctor Service
2. Air Ambulance
3. CareFlight, Angel Flight
4. Coastal surveillance – beach and shark patrols
5. Flying training schools
6. Aero Clubs
7. Aircraft maintenance and Engineering
8. Aircraft design and manufacturing
9. Agricultural spraying, seeding, top dressing, etc
10. Aerial mustering
11. Bushfire spotting and water bombing
12. Tourist flights
13. Charter and air taxi services
14. Parachuting
15. Gliding
16. Ballooning
17. Antique and historic restoration warbirds
18. Business commuting – (stock and station agents, medical specialists, consultants, etc)
19. Aerial photography – mapping
20. Fish spotting
21. Emergency flights to and from disaster areas
22. Private and business Cross Country Commuting
23. Environmental Surveys
24. Police and law enforcement
25. Rural and mining servicing
26. Scouts and Air League

THE IMPORTANCE OF GENERAL AVIATION

Developers and economists with the “user pays” theories are all SHORT TERM theorists. The pay back from G.A. is a long term national one of great strategic importance and should never be loaded onto the backs of today’s small industry players. A US comprehensive report by Wilbur Smith Associates on the Economic Impact of Civil Aviation on the U.S. Economy, found that G.A. had a favourable impact on the nation’s economy of \$42 billion per year.

Here are a few of my thoughts as to why G.A. is important to Australia as a Nation.

1. Transport, Communication and Decentralisation

- a) Australia is a vast country geographically with a relative low density of population
- b) Because of transport and communication difficulties 90% of the population live in a few major cities and towns which are becoming overcrowded and fraught with traffic jams. Freeways and main roads are crowded and inadequately maintained. Road accidents are common.
- c) Long distances and dispersion of population make country railways uneconomical and are as a consequence inefficient if non- existent.
- d) Airline services interstate and intrastate are radially organised to connect country towns to capital cities. They are marginally viable and there is no air service connecting towns to towns. If one needs to travel from Grafton to Dubbo to Wagga, the only way is to fly to Sydney, wait and catch another service to each place. One is forced to go by car and add to the overcrowded road traffic.
- e) Horses are too slow!
- f) Coastal travel by sea has become impossible because of the lack of dredging and maintenance of ports and the silting up of many bars.

In North America large cities are scattered throughout the countryside, principally because transport is efficient between all areas. G.A. plays a large part in this and most large cities boast many airports and facilities, albeit some very small fields in suburban areas.

2. Environment

The use of G.A. for transport compared with motor vehicles would have a profound benefit on the Australian environment considering that aircraft burn fuel much cleaner than automobiles for the following reasons:-

Aircraft engines have dual electrical systems, including dual spark plugs per cylinder, for more complete fuel burn.

- a) Fuel-air mixture is precisely leaned for changing atmospheric conditions of temperature and pressure. Automobiles are not so equipped.
- b) Fuel is a higher grade, manufactured to higher standards.
- c) Aircraft engines are maintained to mandatory governmental standards resulting in cleaner fuel burn.

Aircraft have less impact on ground and atmospheric air quality than automobiles due to the following:

Automobiles must travel on prepared earth surface highways which have the following detrimental effects.-

- a) They are expensive to build and maintain
- b) They occupy valuable land
- c) Cause of significant atmospheric heating

GA just uses the SKY!

3. Saving of Lives

How can you put a \$ value on this? Travel by aircraft is 47 times safer per passenger mile than by automobile according to the US Department of Transport. Because of our better flying conditions and poor roadways the savings are obviously even better than this!

4. Defence and Coastal Surveillance

There is a continuous need for Australia to maintain a viable defence force. In times of peace, funds for defence take second place, however it is important that there be a pool of trained pilots and aviation maintenance organisations at the ready. The expansion of G.A. is an inexpensive way to create and maintain a large pool of resources which can be called upon in times of need.

5. Education and Training

G.A can provide a rich source of education and training of people for our airlines and as solid practical training for other industries concerned with engineering and associated disciplines

6. Agriculture

Crop dusting, insect spraying, mustering, aerial surveying, property management are all part of G.A. which plays a vital part in our nation's agriculture. More than most countries Australia is short of high productive, agricultural activities. Our soils and climatic conditions are not conducive to high production so that all types of aerial agriculture operations are essential. Most of our land holdings could not survive without G.A.

7. Search and Rescue

Australia depends a lot on aerial search and rescue, beach patrols etc. for the reason that our coastline is so extensive and this a very important part of G.A.

8. Bush Fires

Bush Fire spotting and aerial water bombing saves thousands of acres of forest every year, plus lives of humans and stock and property.

9. Sport and Recreation

Flying as a sport is just as important as playing golf, cricket or tennis. More important than horse racing, car racing all of which take up more land and facilities than a strip for light aircraft.

10. **RFDS and Air Ambulance**

The Flying Doctor Service and the Air Ambulance organisation are both part of G.A. and are unquestionably essential services for people living or travelling in the country.

11. **Disaster Relief**

During floods, cyclones or bushfires the flying in of supplies and support and the evacuating of people is an important role of G.A.

12. **Employment**

GA directly and indirectly provides jobs and apprenticeships for many thousands of people. It serves as a training ground for the Air Force and the airlines who are starting to suffer from the shortage of professional people. There is already a shortage of aircraft maintenance personnel and aeronautical engineers because of the Decline in G.A.

WHAT THE GENERAL AVIATION POLICY SHOULD PROVIDE FOR:

1. Airfields

There appears to be no appreciation or understanding of the need to provide adequate airports and emergency landing grounds for GA.

Existing airfields are being closed or made uneconomically viable by State and Local Government organisations lured away by “Developers” solving short term self imposed financial problems.

None of the Universities or Technical Institutions who teach Town and Country Planning know or teach anything about the need for GA and the provision of adequate airfields (we need to teach the teachers to start with). Show them why GA is important, if not essential, and why GA must have adequate accessible landing grounds and facilities. Airfields are not a parochial matter, but should be a national responsibility.

Existing airports and future areas for airports should be “zoned” as such and not allowed to be sold off and used for other purposes.

Just one big GA airport only for Sydney, like Bankstown used to be is not only what is required – It was already overcrowded with more runway incursions than anywhere else in Australia. Its procedures are forever changing and most country aviators are scared to use it. We need to have Schofields back again, Hoxton Park secured, a North Shore airfield acquired plus a number of grass strips.

Bankstown could remain the major GA aerodrome in Sydney with facilities for maintenance and hangarage but with less complicated circuit patterns and access lanes. Charges for maintenance and parking should be reduced to encourage GA organisations to return. The same should be said for the major G.A. airports in the other capital cities, Moorabin, Jandakot, Archerfield etc.

In USA there is an average of 110 airports in every state and every state has an aviation director whose policy to support and promote G.A.

An airport is a community asset, an infrastructure necessity. It should not have to pay for itself directly. Like streets, thoroughfares, parks, sports grounds, etc it is a public amenity and indirectly contributes far more to the national economy than any of these other facilities (see G.A. Airports Paying their Way, Paper by AOPA-USA and Guide to Obtaining Support for your Local Airport). Cars are not required to pay every time they drive up a street.

Norm Crabtree, Director of Aviation for the State of Ohio has been quoted as saying:-

The airport runway is the most important main street in any town

A recently released DVD “One Six Right” has been produced to illustrate the importance of Van Nuys airport, only one of ten, in Los Angeles. This is worth viewing!

To provide easy access for pilots and passengers to fly into and out of Sydney, it is NOT just one large GA airport at Bankstown where it takes longer for most people to drive through city traffic than it does to fly all the way to Quirindi, Dubbo or Temora but several small grass fields distributed throughout the metropolitan area. A mown grass airfield need not occupy more than the area of 2 golf fairways. They can be sited alongside golf courses, camping grounds, parks, etc, or on the sea front so that approach and take off areas are not directly over built up residential areas and need to be accessible to any city area within 20 mins drive.

These don't need to be an “aerodrome” as such but a landing strip – a mown grass field or strip some 700 metres long and about 70 metres wide – not much more than a Par 5 fairway on a golf course.

As an example, in the Sydney Metropolitan area there are no less than 116 golf courses, 3,200 parks and playing fields, etc. 33 caravan parks, 12 racecourses, 117 sports grounds, rifle ranges, etc.

A recent visit from the Master of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators from London has advised us that in the UK where G.A. is not nearly so essential to decentralisation and communication as it is in Australia there are no less than 9 light aircraft fields within a radius of 15-20 miles of the city of London. These are all in addition to the 3 major commercial airports servicing London, Heathrow, Gatwick and City.

These light aircraft landing fields are:-

Elstree
Denham
Wycombe
White Waltham
Blackbushe
Fairoaks
Farnborough
Biggin Hill
Red Hill

If General Aviation is to flourish or even survive we must have proper planning and zoning of airfields.

They not only provide a place for aircraft to land but quickly become a hive of activity for employment and training in all sorts of related interests and business.

2. Self- Administration

Self-Administration for private G.A. should be delegated to an appropriate industry organisation.

Self-Administration is already being handled for ultra light aircraft through an industry association which has proven to be most efficient and cost effective. This part of G.A. is booming whilst the rest of G.A. is deteriorating.

The cost of Self-Administration by an efficient industry body has proven that the total cost for a pilot/owner is only \$120 per annum.

3. CASA Regulations

CASA regulations should be tempered with a policy for the development and promotion of G.A. and requirements which are not strictly of an important safety matter should be amended if not eliminated. Breaching of regulations should NOT be a CRIMINAL offence. New Zealand and USA regulations should be used as an example.

4. Cost Recovery

Should be transparent with a proper independent audit of costs incurred. The User Pays Policy should be no more arduous than for the Road Traffic industry.

5. Air Services

Air space and air services should be more user friendly for G.A. including weather briefing from voluntary Met. Observers. Such services should be cost effective (just one of the operators at Bankstown Airport has been charged \$120,000 per annum as a contribution to tower expenses).

Actual Weather Observers - One very important function 'CASA' could provide or organise which would be of great assistance to G.A. and at the same time fulfill a SAFETY function now totally missing.

6. Education

The government policy on G.A should provide for the encouragement of training and support of airshows, forums, school programs and general public relations promotions.

Yours sincerely

AUSTRALIAN GENERAL AVIATION ALLIANCE

Philip Dulhunty OAM

Director

4.12.06