

TOWARDS A NATIONAL AVIATION POLICY STATEMENT SUBMISSION FROM THE QUEENSLAND AVIATION INDUSTRY LEADERS COUNCIL

Executive Summary

The Queensland Aviation “Industry Leaders Council” (ILC) has been formed within the context of the Aviation Skills Formation Strategy, an action item under the Queensland Government’s “Skilling Queensland” Plan, to champion key initiatives for industry peers and stakeholders and to provide guidance and support on strategic, political and regulatory issues. Skills Formation Strategies aim to get all industry stakeholders to partner to address a range of workforce development issues and to achieve long term solutions.

The Aviation Industry Leaders Council supports the Government’s initiative to create a comprehensive National Aviation Policy.

The ILC believes that a national body – an “Aviation Industry Skilling Council” – should be established and would comprise all aviation and aerospace industry stakeholders and would be responsible for the workforce standards and competencies, among other items. The ILC recognizes that Manufacturing Skills Australia and the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council are key stakeholders. However, the ILC would note that the size of the aviation industry warrants a separate body as suggested in this submission.

Government funding assistance to a number of trainees/apprentices is required to widen the pool of potential applications to join the industry. Current education and training methods need overhaul to meet industry requirements today and prepare for future industry development, particularly to reduce the impact of the world-wide shortage of aviation people on the Australian scene.

Consolidated List of Recommendations

- Create an Aviation Industry Skilling Council to determine the whole of aviation industry skills requirement and set minimum standards and competencies for aviation and aerospace skilling;
- Adopt the Queensland Government’s “Skills Formation Strategy” model for workforce development and planning that involves all stakeholders;
- Establish funding assistance for trainees, particularly pilots and aircraft maintenance apprentices (who are trained under the “institutional” training model);
- Encourage the formation of a single entity to be the voice of industry to Government;
- Encourage State education departments to establish industry specialist “gateway” schools through their respective States that are linked to industry partners;
- Encourage State education departments to adopt curricula that are closer aligned to meet industry needs, particularly to overcome poor levels of literacy and numeracy and increase the standard of Mathematics;
- Establish industry policy and strategies to reduce the shortage of airline pilots and flying instructors;
- Review CASA’s role and amend to include fostering industry development;
- Encourage CASA to remove anomalies from the regulations and standardise interpretation of the regulations within its ranks
- Invest in geographical aviation centres of excellence. Such centres of excellence maximize the ability to attract the limited people resources and reflect industry grouping.

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Introduction

The Queensland Aviation “Industry Leaders Council” has been formed within the context of the Aviation Skills Formation Strategy, an action item under the Queensland Government’s “Skilling Queensland” Plan. This particular Strategy is a joint initiative of the Department of Education, Training and the Arts and the Department of Tourism, Regional Development and Industry to get the aviation industry, training and education providers, government and other stakeholders to partner to address a range of existing and emerging workforce development and planning issues and to achieve long term solutions.

Expected outcomes are:

- understanding and ownership
- collaboration, networking and collective action, and
- sustainability of industry ownership after the project stage is completed.

The role of the Industry Leaders Council (ILC) is to champion key initiatives for industry peers and stakeholders and to provide guidance and support on strategic, political and regulatory issues. Within the State, five specialist working parties have also been formed to work on local and sector specific issues; these groups cover Cairns, Townsville, Wide Bay Burnett, Sunshine Coast and Unmanned Airborne Vehicles. They pass to the Industry Leaders Council (ILC) those items that need political and/or regulatory attention.

The Aviation Industry Leaders Council supports the Government’s initiative to create a comprehensive National Aviation Policy. A number of proposals are made in response to the Minister’s invitation to have input to the “Towards a National Aviation Policy”.

Background

The aviation and aerospace industry in Queensland is already benefiting from a number of specific skilling initiatives that have been started by both industry and government. These activities include the establishment of Aviation Australia; along with Boeing and Aviation Australia, the creation of the Aerospace Project that has included Aerospace Studies as an “university entry level” subject in 17 Queensland high schools and the creation of Aviation High, among other actions; the creation of the Cairns Aviation Skills Centre; and the development of industry reference groups in a number of regions. And a number of Queensland universities are expanding their aviation and aerospace programs and co-operating with industry and training providers to better cater for industry requirements.

Many other successes have also been achieved in strengthening the aviation and aerospace industry in the State.

This Skills Formation Strategy covers aviation and aerospace industry state-wide with priority to SE Queensland, Townsville and Cairns and the Wide Bay-Burnett regions where aviation is a key component of their "Centres of Enterprise" strategies. This strategy was developed recognising the investment made by and the needs of industry in these geographical areas.

Within this context, the Strategy includes operations, education and training, airports, engineering, logistics, the growing simulation and the emerging UAV industries. The strategy will not cover sports aviation (ultra-lights, aerobatics, ballooning, gliding, hang/para gliding, parachuting, etc), tourism, transport or historical collections.

This submission concentrates on skills related material across the industry, and does not focus directly on responses to other questions posed in the “Towards a National Aviation Policy” Issues

TOWARDS A NATIONAL AVIATION POLICY STATEMENT SUBMISSION FROM THE QUEENSLAND AVIATION INDUSTRY LEADERS COUNCIL

Paper. The ILC focuses on workforce development and planning issues affecting the industry in Queensland and thus will not address the others items raised in the Issues Paper.

Create an Aviation Industry Skilling Council

The ILC believes that a national body – an Aviation Industry Skilling Council – should be established. This body would comprise of aviation and aerospace industry enterprises, regulatory bodies, State and Federal Government representatives and industry training providers. The purpose of this Council would be, among other responsibilities, to:

- set minimum standards and competencies for aviation and aerospace skilling;
- analyse the aviation market to determine the whole of aviation industry need for labour and skills development;
- develop clear pathways from school into industry (it could also consider pathways from Defence to commercial providers);
- conduct integrated industry wide workforce planning, including:
 - the types of aviation experts required - where and when; and
 - determination of standards for alternative training solutions to address needs that cannot be addressed with in the current framework;
- set standards for the “fast track” certification of people transitioning from other industries; and
- develop tools to assist GA operators and other SMEs to access training content, providers and pathways easily.

This Council should therefore replace the roles covered by:

- Manufacturing Skills Australia, and
- the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (TLISC)

in their respective parts of industry and so create more coherent training standards to cover all of industry needs. An Aviation Industry Skilling Council would also more effectively advise on those qualifications that have been overlooked in the overall context of industry skills requirements, such as aerospace manufacturing, operations and logistics. This council must be focused on meeting the immediate needs of skilling the industry, while also focusing on developing the strategies to support the continued growth of the industry.

Long term training needs of the industry should cover the range of disciplines required by the industry – not just flying and maintenance training. Airline and airport operations, airport construction and maintenance, and logistics (et al) qualifications are required to help overcome both skills and labour shortages in those industry sectors. The severe shortage of air traffic controllers also need to be addressed in a comprehensive manner before adverse impact is felt in operations. One way to help reduce the demand could be to open air traffic control training to commercial operators for increased cost effectiveness. An Aviation Industry Skills Council could provide the essential needs analysis and develop the necessary training packages to fulfil this requirement.

It could also operate with similar objectives to the Mining Industry Skilling Centre (MISC), which was successful in mapping mining needs and pathways for the industry.

Recommendation

- Create an Aviation Industry Skilling Council to determine the whole of aviation industry need for skills and set minimum standards and competencies for aviation and aerospace skilling.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL AVIATION POLICY STATEMENT SUBMISSION FROM THE QUEENSLAND AVIATION INDUSTRY LEADERS COUNCIL

Skills Formation Strategy

The Federal Government should adopt the Queensland Government's model – the Skills Formation Strategy - for workforce development and planning that involves all stakeholders. The Skills Formation Strategy is designed to encourage business, organisations, regulatory bodies, government education providers and registered training providers to partner on long term solutions to workforce planning issues; for example utilisation of staff, job redesign, new training approaches, better career planning and integrated training pathways.

A national approach to the Skills Formation Strategy could also be an outcome of the Aviation Industry Skills Council.

Recommendation

- Adopt the Queensland Government's "Skills Formation Strategy" model for workforce development and planning that involves all stakeholders.

Funding Assistance for Aviation/Aerospace Apprentices/Trainees/Cadets

The cost of training, even for those who have their attendance subsidised under existing Government schemes, prevent many people from entering the industry because they cannot afford the direct and indirect costs. This also applies to those who wish to change industries but cannot afford the training or the living costs incurred during the training period.

Government should therefore investigate the establishment of funding assistance for trainees, particularly pilots and aircraft maintenance apprentices (under the "institutional" training model). This assistance could be in the form of a loan (with interest)/HECS fee arrangement. In doing so, Government should continue the "Fee-Help" for student pilots who are attending the Bachelor of Aviation program. However, this program should be extended to all training schools that are accredited to train to approved curricula in any aviation skill. Specific criteria for flying schools, such as being a RTO and conduct airline training (for pilots), could be considered.

The new body, working in association with state and federal governments, should coordinate government aviation skill funding to ensure minimizing duplication and effective use of public funds.

Recommendation

- Establish funding assistance for trainees, particularly pilots and aircraft maintenance apprentices (who are trained under the "institutional" training model).

Aviation Industry Body

Government and industry could work closer together if one industry body represented all aspects/factions of industry, rather than currently disparate voices from a number of different lobby groups. While the proposal to establish an Aviation Industry Skills Council should cover all workforce, training and skills related issues, there remain many other issues that need to be addressed by industry as one voice to government. Bodies have been generated by those with good intent; however, all seemingly have fallen short of being recognised as the true industry body representing issues to government.

Recommendation

- Encourage the formation of a single entity to be the voice of industry to Government of which the Aviation Industry Skills Council would be a subset.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL AVIATION POLICY STATEMENT SUBMISSION FROM THE QUEENSLAND AVIATION INDUSTRY LEADERS COUNCIL

School-Industry Inter-Relationships

The pathways to industry from secondary school are important, particularly for those not going to university in the first instance. Like Queensland, States could establish “gateway” schools that are linked to industry players for specialist assistance, work experience, exposure of career paths and access for school-based traineeships/apprenticeships, among other attributes. While “adopt a school” program has been encouraged by the Federal Government, getting the respective education department integrated into the program provides for greater standardization and support than leaving the arrangement to be made by enterprises by themselves. This approach also helps with strategies to attract, retain and plan for industry’s skills needs. This will require all stakeholders to:

- develop industry recognised career paths for all industry sectors;
- provide suitable training for schools career advisors, regional industry careers advisors (RICAs);
- develop easily interpreted and navigated aviation career websites; and
- target geographical areas for either aviation or specific skills to align with industry investment.

Recommendation

- Encourage State education departments to establish industry specialist “gateway” schools through their respective States that are linked to industry partners.

Impact of Current Education Standards on Industry

The variations in delivery and the contemporary design of the secondary school curriculum towards “free expression” and wider subject choices are now adversely impacting industry to the extent that a number of poor attributes and attitudes are now being exposed; for example, school graduates are now exhibiting poor literary and numeracy skills, low self esteem and a lack of respect seems the norm. Generally, students are poorly prepared to enter the workforce and in particular the aviation industry which requires a high level of conformity to ensure safety.

Another issue is the level of Mathematics taught in schools. Maths B/C and Physics are a pre-requisite for many Defence and aviation career pathways and the level of these subjects do not appear to be of the level that meet industry requirements, particularly in today’s high technology workplaces. A focus on education for Maths and Physics teachers is also necessary to ensure that the curriculum can be delivered at levels appropriate to industry and career pathways in general.

Recommendations

- Encourage State education departments to adopt curricula that are closer aligned to meet industry needs, particularly to overcome poor levels of literacy and numeracy and increase the standard of Mathematics

Flying Training

Given the shortage of airline pilots, additional strategies and policies need to be created to reduce the shortfall and establish innovative methods of flying training to meet all operators’ requirements, particularly mainstream and “tier two and three” airlines. The recent announcement made with the launch of the latest version to the TLISC Aviation Training Package do not diminish the need for a comprehensive and coherent approach to solving the existing pilot shortage as there are more issues to solve – e.g. cost, standards, wages, etc – than just training. The traditional method of training from private pilots licence to commercial, then to air transport pilots licence standard, with the attendant need to accrue a relatively high number of flying hours to demonstrate experience, has outlived its usefulness to meet modern airline company labour needs. The trial Multi-Crew Pilots Licence (MCPL) could ameliorate the

TOWARDS A NATIONAL AVIATION POLICY STATEMENT SUBMISSION FROM THE QUEENSLAND AVIATION INDUSTRY LEADERS COUNCIL

problem but other models and supporting mechanisms are required; e.g. funding assistance, industry-wide application.

The Government should encourage suitable flying training schools/organisations to focus on providing airline training. However, along with the shortage of pilots in general, a shortage of qualified and experienced flying instructors is also evident. Some innovative strategies, with industry support, also need to be established. While the establishment of a national “Central Flying School” for instructor training may seem attractive, it is not the recommended course of action by the ISC. Coherent and comprehensive standards, consistently applied, need to be established to better regulate training providers, and allow industry deliver courses to continue to drive competitiveness in industry. The regulator should assess a provider’s course content, as well as the learning and assessment process to ensure maintenance of standards. An increase in standards, and becoming standardized, could be achieved by ensuring flying training schools:

- becoming RTOs
- partner with airlines, or collective airlines grouping, e.g. OneWorld, Star Alliance
- networking to work collectively on standards

Recommendation

- Establish industry policy and strategies to reduce the shortage of airline pilots and flying instructors

The Role of CASA

CASA is an integral part of any skilling solution and needs to be involved to ensure proposed career pathways and fast track training solutions meet the Air Operations Safety requirements. A change of regulation may also be to assist with the implementation of innovative solutions. The regulator’s role could be developed to:

- foster industry development; and
- be the regulator and in doing so, remove anomalies from the regulations, standardise interpretation of the regulations, and assist to raise safety, operational and training standards.

Recommendations

- Review CASA’s role and amend to include fostering industry development;
- Encourage CASA to remove anomalies from the regulations and standardise interpretation of the regulations within its ranks

Conclusion

The Aviation Industry Leaders Council supports the Government’s initiative to create a comprehensive National Aviation Policy and is prepared to participate, from a Queensland perspective, to assist with the implementation of the above proposals.

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