

I've been an aircraft owner since 1978. During the period of time prior to my immigration to Australia in 2005 business usage of my aircraft has averaged out to between 70-90% each year. Since coming to Australia I have also had opportunities to use my Mooney for business travel, so a comparison of flying in the two very different environments invites some comparison. While a flight is a flight - whether for pleasure or business - there are aspects that tend to be different in these two regimes. I intend to focus my comments primarily towards the factors influencing flight decisions in relation to business travel.

Before moving into the main items I wish to discuss, I do want to address the unbelievable lack of infrastructure that has greatly impacted on my business use of my plane here in Sydney, namely the serious lack of airports surrounding this large and prosperous metropolitan area. I cannot think of any major city in America or Europe that has only 2 GA airports for a city of this population! To use my aircraft for business requires that I must drive a minimum of 1 hour (1.5 hours in peak traffic), suffer \$24 in road tolls, and still add additional time for refueling, etc. There have been more than a few times where I have just not bothered. In my opinion it has been a mistake of tragic proportions that has allowed the situation in the Sydney area to deteriorate to the point that it has. The sale and closure of Hoxton Park is simply indefensible. This is infrastructure that can and will sadly never be replenished. It is shameful that any government could be so short sighted. The demise of flying schools, maintenance facilities brought about by these decisions have a ripple effect through the entire aviation industry. It isn't just a few "rich" guys and their toys. One only has to look at the current pilot shortage to see what has happened. Pilots feed into the airlines and military and thus are vital for the defense of the nation. Indications are that similar pressures exist in the rest of Australia which may lead to a similar result unless decisive corrective actions are taken. But I digress.

Business flying (and all flying) requires careful preparation, and excellent maintenance if the tool is to be used properly. Business flying, by nature, is somewhat less optional than recreational flying; if one commits to a trip a lot is at stake if the trip cannot be completed. Recreational flying is just that, and a cancellation does not carry the same penalty. The following issues come to mind:

1. The lack of maintenance facilities and readily accessible parts has had a significant impact on my ability to use the aircraft for business. Often parts have to be imported from the USA at large expense, and sometimes just finding a LAME willing to work on the aircraft has been problematic.
2. Lack of infrastructure - such as transportation (at regional and remote airports), lack of telephones, lack of computers for flight planning, and even lack of petrol. Compared to the USA such infrastructure in Australia is almost non-existent.
3. Safety. Of all the issues I wish to discuss the most important to me is the clear deficiency in airborne weather. A pilot can do a fantastic job of preparation for a long flight but be defeated by changing, un-forecast, weather. Business flights, by

nature, probably involve longer trips, and trips to areas not covered by RPT. They are therefore more subject to such unforeseen weather. For a trip to be completed in confidence, having the ability to receive up to date, and knowledgeable, weather information is critical. In my observation and experience in Australia this is mostly lacking. Calls to flight watch often go unanswered, but even when answered, do not result in much useful information to a pilot in flight. Airservices "briefers" know nothing about the weather and can only parrot information that the pilot reads before takeoff, or updated information coming off a computer. They appear to have no interpretive ability, or are unwilling to share such information if they do. Questions about advisable routes around storm buildups, weather between a current position and destination along a route, essentially go unanswered. The most egregious flaw in the Australian weather system, in my opinion, is that ATC controllers with radar coverage, are not able to advise pilots of dangerous thunderstorm buildups for fear of litigation. Personally I think this is criminal and truly defies logic. The USA, often thought of as the world's most litigious society, does not restrict the flow of such information. I can personally remember many flights where a controller, or flight watch briefer, would actually advise a route in order to deviate around potentially dangerous weather. This in a country (the USA) where pilots are already "spoiled" by real time downloadable weather from satellites. This does not build confidence, and is a serious issue of safety. In my view it is entirely unreasonable to expect a GA pilot, in flight, to be able to have "all available information" as if they were on the ground prior to a flight. Controllers and weather briefers should be required to assist pilots in flight with this information. Unfortunately in Australia it is not forthcoming to a significant degree. With the lack of infrastructure (airports) pilots often have few diversion options which are often a considerable distance away, and even knowing if one can successfully divert is based on having current and complete weather information. Here in Australia - where no such system yet exists - pilots need all the help they can get from weather briefers and controllers. My short term recommendation would be that a pilot calling flight watch should be able to request that the briefer set up a land line connection directly to the BOM so that the pilot in flight can receive some interpretive help from a trained weather specialist. Long term I would hope that eventually information from the BOM could be directly accessed in flight, either through internet or satellite.

In my opinion safety is the result of a multifaceted culture of regulation, support, training, and professionalism. What I observe in Australia is a high degree of regulation; regulation to the point where there is a culture of fear of doing something wrong, such as even asking for the assistance of a controller (and in some cases controllers making that fear justifiable - though certainly that is the exception). There are aspects of instrument training that are unnecessarily confusing because of very complicated regulations, where even flight examiners cannot agree on the correct interpretations (I'm speaking here of certain GPS procedures). And to continue on about instrument proficiency, I have found it utterly impossible to practice instrument procedures in VFR conditions that mimic what would be found under actual conditions. The controllers will simply refuse all such

requests. This leads me to the conclusion that while regulation is certainly essential to some degree, it is the support around that regulation that seems to me to be lacking. GA pilots lack support for essential weather, essential recurrent training (IFR), and of infrastructure. While flying in this great country is a privilege I value highly I am often nostalgic for the “completeness” of the system in the USA. And while I continue to try to use my plane for business travel there are difficulties that at times seem somewhat insurmountable. This is most unfortunate given the vastness of Australia, and the lack of many decent roadways. Aviation ought to be thriving in this country yet it seems moribund. The mandate of the FAA is to “promote aviation.” While CASA’s mandate is to “promote safety.” Both are noble and worthy causes. I do believe, however, that if CASA were to “promote aviation” through support, safety would be greatly enhanced. As things stand now the lack of support is a detriment to safety, and a detriment that no amount of regulation will ever fix. Perhaps regulation works sufficiently for the airlines given that they mostly create their own infrastructure. GA, by definition, needs the assistance of CASA and Airservices; at times it seems like both organizations think of GA as a sort of nuisance they wish would just go away.

Sincerely,

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