

Australian Association of Flight Instructors Incorporated



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AAFI was disappointed not to be among those invited to attend the review panel meeting at Bankstown on Wednesday December 11, however we are encouraged from the positive feedback that was subsequently received. It is refreshing to see the review panel engaging with industry; indeed we think this is a vital and necessary process.

AAFI did however attend the CASA CFI's conference last October, leaving us with a view that CASA had started to address some of the Flying Industry's concerns. Thankfully the establishment of the Aviation Safety Regulation Review provides us with an opportunity to deliver our thoughts on a number of remaining concerns which we believe will impact negatively on Flying Training Organisations.

It is of concern to AAFI that after so much investment in time and resources by CASA the implementation of part 61, 141 and 142 could fall so out of favour with the industry. This leads to the conclusion that either the 'industry' was caught sleeping by the new rules (as CASA would have us believe), or the method of implementation and development was flawed.

For such a unanimous outcry against much of the proposed changes to exist just prior to the initial Dec 2013 implementation date would suggest to AAFI that CASA were seriously out of step with the industry. Despite CASA's protestation AAFI is of the opinion that much of the fault lies with the scarcity of educational material made available in a timely manner prior to implementation.

Recent changes to Australian airspace that saw the Class D procedures applied to what were previously GAAP aerodromes saw a flurry of material made available by CASA which led to a relatively smooth transition. While acknowledging the nature of the current changes is far more complex than this example surely it would follow that there would be an appropriately thorough education process for these changes.

In fact what we found was that most of the education was accomplished by a handful of 'face to face' briefings by CASA that would have been lucky to achieve more than 20% coverage of Australian pilots. Whilst CASA employees/consultants did their best to communicate the significant changes pending they were hampered by a lack of resources and indeed in some instances the material was incomplete because the 'Manual of Standards' was not available just 2 weeks out from the start date.

This led to the situation where many in the industry were faced to varying extents with uncertainty as to what the new regulations would mean to them yet the message from CASA was clear, "get

used to these changes, they are coming.” Such a disconnect of CASA from the industry is unfortunate and AAFI believes that this issue needs to be addressed in order for CASA to fulfil its role.

Single Government Agency Dedicated to Aviation

Regulatory development

AAFI believes that the role of fostering and promoting aviation in Australia is of vital importance if we want to grow our industry. It has been decades since a single government agency has been responsible for this role and perhaps this is the main indicator of why there has been such a failure in regulatory development.

AAFI is not alone in the belief that Regulatory development would proceed more efficiently and logically if it were handed over to a single government agency under a dedicated Minister and department tasked solely with the Aviation Portfolio.

Most would surely agree that the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Warren Truss in his capacity as Minister for Infrastructure & Regional Development has already taken a great initiative in announcing this review. We can only hope the review won't be lost in a generic department which is weighed down with all sectors of transport and infrastructure and the myriad concerns that they all naturally have. A single aviation department can only lead to better regulatory and safety outcomes for the Aviation Industry, when it is not diluted by so many other industry sectors.

Many sectors of aviation, particularly General Aviation, continue to have difficulty in relating to a set of regulations which are overly complex, often not relevant to their sector and in a constant state of flux.

It can be seen that handing over responsibility for regulatory development to a single government agency, should in the medium term, lead to a more user friendly, relevant set of regulations which more closely match the requirements of each aviation sector. It would no doubt have the knock-on effect of reducing administration costs.

Areas of Responsibility

Safety Education

As the ATSB is responsible for investigation into Accidents and Incidents, it is perhaps worth considering that the ATSB take on the role of primary Aviation Safety educator to Australia's pilots and operators. This would remove ambiguity from CASA's role as our Aviation Authority – responsible of policing standards and enforcement of the rules.

One point AAFI would like to press is the need to include non-VH registered (RA-AUS) recreational aircraft in the annually released ATSB aviation statistics, so we can better contrast and compare the accident and incident rates of the GA sector with those of the Recreational sector, as the training ad

education requirements do somewhat differ, the non-VH sector necessarily having a lower standard to adhere to.

Operational Education

Overall, AAFI believes that CASA has done a fair job at educating Australia's pilots historically – however lately there has been a definite decline in the ability of CASA to keep pace with the changes put forth and the need to prepare industry for those changes. The CASA web site is a prime example of a need for improvement. Frequently off-line and very difficult to search for relevant documents or pages. It was noted by AAFI members that at a recent Safety seminar that the CASA presenter stated that he found it far easier to search via google search rather than the CASA site's internal search box.

AAFI believes the role of Operational educator should remain with CASA, but a definite improvement is needed.

Operational Templates

One of AAFI's prime sticking points with regard to parts 61, 141 and 142 is the huge cost burden, both in time and money, which is thrust upon our industry, particularly the GA sector.

If CASA were to provide standardised templates it would immediately deliver benefits to all parties, CASA included. Not only would it lead to a huge cost and time saving for operators, it would reduce the resources applied by CASA to separately assess and approve all the Expositions, with their myriad documents contained therein, by the hundreds of operators throughout Australia.

This would lead to a uniform high standard (which CASA has been able to control), and as stated a cost and time saving for both our nations aviation operators and the regulator both. It truly would be a win-win situation.

Of course, it must be recognised that every operation is subtly different in its requirements; therefore each operator would need to apply for changes to the standard template, much as Australia details minor changes to its aviation regulations from that of ICAO. This would still be far simpler than CASA having to assess and approve a myriad of vastly different Expositions.

At the recent CFI conference dealing with the upcoming changes, several of our members consulted with one another and it was decided that 5-6 months would not be an unrealistic a time frame requirement to create the necessary documentation (Syllabus, training matrix, safety management system, fatigue management system etc.). This is an unrealistic expectation for a small flying school to have to deal with.

Another issue that was raised was the risk of all of the documentation being plagiarised when a student moves from one flying school to another. Another problem that would be solved by a standardised set of CASA documents.

Services and Fees

CASA fees are unaffordable, particularly in country centres.

Under the current structure of charging, country areas are severely disadvantaged by the added impost of casa travel charges. We would like to see a review of these charges with a view to finding increased efficiencies or an altered charging structure to relieve this burden. Many industries provide incentives for skilled workers to locate to rural areas (medical practitioners, teachers, emergency services etc.), whilst we understand that a financial incentive would be difficult to put in place, we at least can strive for a state of affairs in which those in rural areas trying to provide the same level of safety and professionalism as their counterparts located on the eastern seaboard are not unduly penalised in order to keep their mandatory qualifications.

Enforcement

Without over stating that which has previously been mentioned, AAFI believes once again, that surveillance and enforcement would be better and more efficiently and fairly managed if CASA didn't have the additional task of being responsible for regulatory change.

As a simplistic comparison, the NSW Police are responsible for enforcement of the road rules; they don't draft the regulations which govern the use of our roads.

We believe CASA should be tasked solely with Surveillance, Enforcement and Operational Education.

AVMED

In principle, AAFI supports the introduction of the lowered medical requirements of the AUSTRROADS medical standard; however we believe that great care must be taken to ensure a safety deficit does not arise.

It is known that the US FAA is being pushed to grant approval for pilots of a drivers licence medical standard to operate Private category flights in aircraft below 6 seats and below 250 kts.

This push has been supported by over 16,000 favourable comments from the aviation community. A provision of the proposed bill is that the FAA must report on the safety consequences of the new rule after 5 years.

Whilst the Part 61 medical changes don't take things quite so far, it must be recognised that there would most likely be a similar favourable view by our GA private pilot community and most would presumably be happy to adhere to the new lower standard.

The existing reduced medical requirement that pertains to the recreational aircraft sector could arguably be seen as one of the main drivers of the proportionally large growth that that sector has seen over the last 10-15 years.

As stated, AAFI has some reservations over the proposed lower standard, namely that there are some medical issues that wouldn't be detected in an AUSTROADS medical (as no symptoms were present for the candidate to report), yet could be detected by a Class 1 or 2 medical. Without going into specifics, this largely reflects a real world case study of one of our members who had an unknown heart condition. That member has now had the opportunity to seek preventative help, and his health (and the safety of any potential aircraft passengers) is now much improved.

AAFI therefore supports the reduction in cost and bureaucracy the AUSTROAD medical promises, but it must be tempered with provisions to keep the same high level of safety we enjoy from the current system.

SUMMARY

It is surely accurate to say that all sectors of our aviation community share the common goal of the highest levels of safety we can realistically hope to obtain. As all operators have a limited cache of time and finances to draw from, and that each operator must not run at a loss, there is a mathematical certainty that safety related issues can only be addressed up to a point.

It is one of CASA's prime responsibilities to see that safety is maintained to a minimum level and over time, to raise that minimum level ever higher. It has attempted to do that through huge rafts of rapidly changing regulation. The truth however, if one looks at the ATSB figures is that safety hasn't improved by anything statistically significant.

We believe that the solution would be to create a Government department committed solely to the overseeing of Aviation in our country. This would free up CASA to really aid safety by being a more effective enforcement authority. Initiatives such as properly constructed templates for the Part 61 Expositions can only act to aid safety, standardise the level of competency of our operators and reduce the cost and time burdens for those same operators.

Australia poses unique problems in that we have a small population base coupled with vast distances, and this presents difficulties in managing our aviation environment.

AAFI believes however that those same unique qualities of the Australian region are the very reason why we should be the world leaders in the aviation arena.

We are quite a way from that lofty goal currently, but with intelligent forethought, and constructive change helped by the Aviation Safety Regulation Review we hope to move forward into a safer, more affordable and less bureaucratically confined future.