

Over the years gliding in Australia, like in most of the aviation-minded world, has developed from those groups of innovative and adventurous individuals that joined together to explore their new found soaring and environment and develop their skills and knowledge.

That this has been done responsibly and, in the main safely, is a credit to club-based system that underpins successful, independent and cost-effective gliding, in Australia and all over the world. This system, administered by the GFA in Australia, promotes a culture of safety based upon airmanship and responsibility (both on the ground and in the air).

Despite advances in technology, the basis for gliding remains the same today. Pilots have adopted new technologies safely and adapted successfully to the ever increasing regulatory burden imposed to satisfy the never ending demands of the airlines on the bureaucrats to eliminate any non-RPT use of Australia's airspace.

The safety record of gliding in Australia is exceptional, evidence of a well managed system that begins with pilot training and development that is consistent at a national level across gliding clubs in every State and run almost entirely by volunteers. The GFA has independently managed the interests of gliding safely, cost-effectively, consistently and with ongoing self-improvement. To alter this can only be to the detriment of aviation safety by driving up costs, removing local oversight and causing antagonism in individuals.

It is imperative that the CASA continues to support the GFA right to self-determine its own culture in support of glider pilots and administer rule-making for pilots, clubs and the maintenance people to ensuring that their aircraft are owned, operated and maintained safely and efficiently in accordance with operating rules, record keeping and audit. The current system of exemptions and delegations is best served by the proposed Part 149 Approved Organisation Model. Any proposed change needs to be supported and justified by valid arguments – a justifiable safety case, sound risk management analysis and a realistic benefit cost benefit analysis that includes direct and indirect impacts.

Should CASA impose further regulation that increase costs, given the fact that GFA is non-profit making and supported by a volunteer system, it has to be recognised that the costs of increased regulatory burden are unlikely to be met by the GFA, clubs and their members. If CASA wishes to mandate extra regulation, unless an appropriate level of additional government funding is provided to fund the resources necessary to meet any new CASA requirements, then it is inevitable that gliding will decline, possibly to near extinction as the preserve of a wealthy few. Given the importance of gliding to developing responsibility and maturity in our youth (recently recognised by the Air Force Cadets in their orders for 25+ new gliders), CASA needs to carefully consider the consequences of its actions on the future development of gliding in Australia.