

# AIRVIEW

INCORPORATING THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE **AHIA**

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It's now a little over twelve months since the Australian Helicopter Industry Association (the AHIA) held its launch event at Rydges Hotel, Bankstown.

It was a small but well-planned event, notable for the absence of a number of high profile respondents who failed to show on the day. This was an ominous sign and left me feeling as I have done before in a previous life, that no matter how hard you try to arrange otherwise, the concept of belonging to a representative group put together to deliver value and negotiate positive outcomes for an industry or sport seems to be losing its appeal.

For the AHIA it's the phoenix rising from the ashes, perhaps ashes that should never have been. Many thought it was game over, some thought that the idea of re-incarnation was whimsical, pointless if you want to be harsh about it. Fortunately, in a few very experienced and passionate heads neither view was shared, the only thing missing was the catalyst. In this case the most likely catalyst was repeated warnings of the risks to an industry sector, whose contribution was immense, but whose voice was not being heard in the right places.

There was ample evidence in the Aviation White Paper in 2009 of the government's belief in a carrot and stick approach to regulatory reform. There were timely reminders to industry of the need to enhance management practices and to utilize the government sponsored structures

put in place to improve productivity and capability and also statements of the government's intent to increase the capability of the regulatory authorities (CASA and the ATSB) to allow them to discharge their responsibilities more effectively.

One thing we all know is that government invitations to collaborate are often heavily camouflaged and like chameleons can change to blend into the current environment to make them even less obvious. The first rule of government appears to be that if you can't find an initiative, incentive or opportunity you don't deserve to benefit. Further, if you're not prepared to work hard and apply yourself, the government sees this as lack of incentive and therefore evidence of unworthiness to benefit. Apparent lack of commitment, or even worse, lack of evidence of strong belief in a cause also provides government with the perfect opportunity to escape.

In the case of the AHIA, recent announcements should put the naysayers to bed. The fact that hundreds of hours of direct consultation with the regulator has still apparently failed to eliminate the drive to impose unworkable regulations, should be a worry to all stakeholders. This in no way reflects the capabilities of the Association's working group put together specifically to provide industry feedback to CASA's reform agenda, in particular the review of CASR Part 61 and the development of an associated manual of standards. It evidences the

ongoing determination of the regulator to pursue a reform agenda at all costs. The fact that industry has offered to provide considerable expertise to the process, whilst acknowledged, appears not to have been sufficiently respected. The rationale here can perhaps be traced back to the 2009 Aviation White Paper. Industry is reminded in the paper that *'the new CASA Board, including the Director of Aviation Safety, is committed to adequate consultation with industry stakeholders on regulatory developments. However, timely regulatory action is in the interests of the travelling public and must take precedence over reaching consensus on every aspect of draft regulations. Submissions in response to the Green Paper indicated that most industry stakeholders accept that full agreement on the detail of regulations will not always be possible'*.

The paper goes on to say *'in conversations with industry, the Director has made it clear CASA will consult widely and thoroughly on regulatory proposals, but that CASA is ultimately responsible for regulatory development. The Government expects CASA, as the regulator, to exercise discretion as to what level of consultation is appropriate and reasonable for each regulatory project'*.

To some this might sound a warning bell because, effectively, it gives the regulator the right to determine what it considers to be an appropriate degree of consultation. Certainly the CASR Part 61 review is strong evidence of a commitment to consult but also strong evidence of the power to cease

it and move on without what the industry feels was an appropriate resolution. The fact that the review was postponed was fortuitous because it saved the industry, albeit a temporary reprieve, from the challenging consequences of a suite of significant regulatory changes. The risk of course is that the postponement may just have been a device to remove the heat from the debate because within days of the announcement the regulator was promoting a road show boldly stating that *'new aviation regulations are coming, and so are the last AvSafety Seminars for 2013 (December). The AvSafety seminar series is specifically designed to help you understand Regulatory change...'* On the roadshow agenda of course was CASR Part 61.

If there was ever a time for industry to unite and to speak with one voice it's now. In the case of the helicopter industry it would be crazy for anyone with skin in the game to remain in isolation. The AHIA's agenda is pure and the Board is working tirelessly to ensure, perhaps against the odds, that the winds of regulatory change blow favorably. It would be wise to accept that the dust has well and truly settled on the past and wise not to dwell on it. Without rank and file support the AHIA won't have the necessary clout to advocate effectively in the combative political arena. Squeaky wheels don't cut it in this game, you need more than that, the base line being hard proof that you represent the bulk of your constituents. It's a bit optimistic to think that politicians (and beaurocrats) might listen if you can't demonstrate that the degree of your influence is significant enough to cause alarm.

*“Recent announcements should put the naysayers to bed”*



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The islands off Papua New Guinea's coastline provide experiences and scenery second to none

## The Freedom Of Flight – Helibiz Helicopter Safaris

In 2006, Airlie Beach based Robinson Helicopter dealer Des Davey and his sales manager Troy Holloway developed an innovative plan – it was to provide the company’s clients with an adventure that would see them not only experience picturesque and remote areas of Australia, but also provide them with valuable flying experiences.

The idea was modeled on the popular ‘rally’ style events offered to owners of Riviera power boats at the time but instead of cruising in company the idea was to fly in company.

It was not long before the first event was run, a trip to the Cape York Peninsula that saw nine helicopters explore the magnificent coastal scenery some of which was completely inaccessible by 4WD or boat. So successful was this ‘adventure’ and so obvious was the scenic platform offered by the helicopters taking part, that a follow up event was planned and run.

Seven years and eighteen safaris later, the concept has matured and now represents one of Australia’s most unique and iconic flying adventures that has seen participants traverse the entire Australian coastline (Tasmania included) and even venture offshore to Papua New Guinea. Much of Australia’s outback has also been explored including Kakadu and the regions of the Kimberley and Pilbara.

The original concept was developed because the two architects saw an opportunity to provide helicopter owners with a much more ambitious travel proposition than they might otherwise have contemplated or even thought possible. ‘Looking at the sort of flying our clients were engaged in gave us the initial idea’ says safari planner and host Troy Holloway. ‘We found that they were making short trips on regular routes, visiting relatives and friends, working within the confines of their properties and we thought we could provide them with a much more comprehensive experience. We also learned from talking with helicopter owners in the broader context, that their flying was generally governed by the need to keep logistics simple and straight forward. Things like finding the right accommodation and arranging access to fuel in remote locations were challenges that many chose to avoid’.

Armed with significant evidence, Des Davey and Troy Holloway drew the logical conclusion. If the burden of trip planning with its associated challenges could be removed, so could the pre-conceived ‘boundaries’ be eliminated. Potential range could therefore be extended opening up the possibility of travelling to some of Australia’s most idyllic and iconic locations. They were right and a new company named simply ‘Helibiz Helicopter Safaris’ took flight.

The fact that helicopters provide a scenic platform unmatched by any other form of transport most certainly added to the concept’s initial attraction as did the unbridled thinking of the safari organisers in the early days. ‘We knew that “freedom of flight” would allow us to access the un-accessible’ says Troy Holloway, ‘so we let our imaginations fly and came up with some innovative itineraries. We wanted to show our guests Australia as they had never seen it before and to provide them with experiences that they would remember for life. It’s amazing what opportunities you can create if you take away the perceived boundaries.’

The largest safari conducted so far is an example of what can be done with the

right approach and attention to detail. Thirty eight helicopters flew from Birdsville to Alice Springs and then to Uluru. ‘Wow that was challenging’ says Troy Holloway, ‘getting thirty eight helicopters burning and turning on the taxiway preparing for a flight around Uluru and the Olgas was a definite challenge but we did it. Even a scheduled Qantas flight requested a delay so they could witness this spectacular event!’

The latest adventure and first “international” safari proves that new opportunities exist albeit with the occasional challenge, Troy Holloway recalls. ‘This most recent flying adventure saw eleven helicopters and their crews enjoy twelve days of amazing sight-seeing that took them, amongst other great places, into beautiful Milne Bay and along the famous and historic Kokoda Trail. Aviation fuel can be a major problem in PNG, in particular Avgas, so a lot of planning went into remote fuel drops particularly finding reliable and secure drop zones. All our remote refueling went to plan but then we had the main fuel supplier tell us on the planned refueling day in Port Moresby that the Avgas was out of date making it unusable. Well, as you can imagine, this threw a spanner in the works because arrangements had all been confirmed prior to our arrival. We tried the other fuel supplier at Jacksons Airfield but regrettably they too had no Avgas. On the positive side however, we were told that the fuel supplier was expecting a delivery but that it had been held up on the PNG waterfront. We saw this as good news because at least we knew there was fresh fuel in Port Moresby even-though it still needed to be unloaded from the ship then cleared by customs and quarantine before final delivery to the depot. The biggest challenge of course was that all this was happening in PNG “local time”. Anyone that’s experienced “local” time around the world will know exactly what I’m talking about - in a nut shell it was pretty frustrating but we found an upside - this unexpected Avgas issue delayed us for 48-hours, so it was back to the hotel compound for several unscheduled “happy hours”!

Whilst the spirit of adventure dominates each safari program, one of its original objectives, the opportunity to improve flying skills, is still clearly in evidence. ‘Some pilots have joined a safari a little rusty which is not uncommon, particularly private pilots with busy working lives’ says Troy Holloway. ‘More often than not, after a couple of days of flying with various landings and take offs, you can see that they’re back in the saddle. For this reason, we offer an advanced training course as an option with each safari, allowing pilots to undertake either five or ten hours of high level instruction. Every pilot that’s completed the advanced training course leaves with better skills and generally a much greater knowledge of their helicopter. The safaris sometimes present additional challenges because we take participants into new environments. Changes of scenery and conditions can sometimes be confronting, particularly for the new comers, but I



can guarantee that every pilot who has been a part of a safari will say that they have learnt a lot from each trip and they generally can't wait to do another. They really come back as much better pilots.'

After eighteen safaris you could be forgiven for thinking that Des Davey and Troy Holloway might have seen enough but that's certainly not the case. In fact, new itineraries are currently being considered and there's always the opportunity to return to some of the spectacular locations previously visited. 'Over the past seven years we have chosen to experience the very best Australia has to offer in our safari program', says Des Davey. 'Each location has been unique, each location is spectacular in its own right and we never say we're not going back. Destinations like Kakadu, the Kimberley and Pilbara, and remote NT and WA coastline territories come to mind. In stark contrast is Tasmania, packed with amazing landscapes, rugged mountains, spectacular river systems and a coastline that leaves you breathless. We have to say the Tassie coast could be Australia's most spectacular, it really is amazing. The Storm Bay cliffs on route to Port Arthur - wow!'

225 helicopters and crews have now participated in Helibiz's eighteen helicopter safaris with a combined total flight time in excess of 5,100 flight hours. These helicopters have included most leading manufacturers including Robinson, Eurocopter and Bell. 'Whilst we want to keep our own customer base together and motivated, this program has never just been for Robinson owners' says Troy Holloway. 'R44 owners were certainly our initial target market because we had dealings with quite a few and we knew there was a degree of interest in what we were proposing. It made sense however to open the program up a bit because it made it easier to broker some of the more difficult arrangements like large scale fuel drops to remote locations. Having said that, most of our participants own Robinson helicopters and that's the way it's been since day one.'

If repeat business is a sensible indicator of success, then the safari project has been

an ultimate success. The diversity of the client base has been a definite contributor, creating the camaraderie necessary to bind groups together over relatively long periods of time and render an event successful. 'We've had plenty of return customers who are now friends and mates and we've shared some fantastic experiences together' says Troy Holloway. 'Whilst on safari you're part of a close knit team and that certainly enhances the experience. Our clients are often from very different walks of life and have included solicitors, farmers, property developers, V8 race team owners and even tradies with most holding private helicopter licenses. These pilots normally bring wives or friends and these people often make things a bit more interesting because of their different backgrounds and life experiences. It makes for great conversation when we socialize and it definitely creates a great atmosphere. But we're not just sitting around listening to other people's life histories, were out there experiencing the elements, seeing new things, enjoying Australia's great landscapes, we're in fact creating new stories to tell'.

It's probably not necessary to spare a thought for Troy Holloway as he prepares for the next great adventure scheduled for early 2014 and focusing on the Murray River, Barossa Valley and Kangaroo Island. That's because he enjoys a challenge and he enjoys the fruits of his labour. 'It's great seeing people exploring and enjoying themselves and to see all your hard work be it logistics, accommodation or re-fuelling arrangements finally come to fruition, but you need to be prepared for the occasional challenge and alternate plans are always in the back of your mind when dealing with Australia's elements. Having said that, these events deliver life changing experiences not only for our clients but also for us as event organisers. They are without doubt the most amazing adventures you will ever undertake if you have a real desire to see this great country of ours.'

If you would like to participate in a future helicopter safari please contact Troy via email at: [sales@helibiz.com](mailto:sales@helibiz.com)



Safari participants can experience first hand the true magic of Australia's outback landscapes

## Player Profile – Julie Abbott – Managing Director, Blue Sky Solutions

For Julie Abbott, there was always going to be a strong connection with aviation.

Not that her parents were directly responsible, both were too busy managing the family's plumbing business which often prevented them from travelling. It was her grandparents that set the agenda. They also taught Julie the meaning and importance of customer service from a very young age, allowing her to observe, and later participate in, the large and successful catering business they ran, specialising in high end functions.

A product of Sydney's southern suburbs, Julie Abbott's home turf was Ramsgate, attending Ramsgate Primary School and then Moorefield Girls High at Kogarah. She performed strongly both academically and in her role as a school prefect and ranked in the top 10% in the state in both English and Maths in her School Certificate examinations. Mainstream academic study was never going to be a long term focus however, there was a much stronger desire to enter the commercial world and put into practice the elite customer service skills she had learned from her grandparents.

The growing connection with aviation came from frequent trips to the airport. 'My grandparents were quite wealthy and travelled a lot. We often went to the airport to see them off and I loved it. I loved watching the aircraft take off and land and the way people came and went. For some reason, the expressions on people's faces became a big thing for me. When my brother and I got a bit older we began to travel with our grandparents so the love of travel and the thrill of aviation began to take hold.'

This embedded love of aviation and a 'light bulb' moment when aged fifteen, 'I was helping out waitressing at various functions run by my grandparents, learning about people, learning how important service was and learning how to connect. I began to understand from a very early age that it was very important to listen to people, to take note of what they wanted and expected. I began to understand that each client had a different expectation and I began to understand the importance of tailoring the products you had to offer to suit the needs of the individual'.

This early career experience, the simple principles Julie learned in her days as a waitress, and an embedded love of aviation drove her to accept the offer of a traineeship at Viva Holidays, a subsidiary of the retail travel consultancy Traveland. As expected, she started in the mailroom but it wasn't



long before she was promoted to relief staff, working in various retail outlets including Caringbah, Cronulla, Bondi Junction and Neutral Bay. Time in the 'finalisation department' where all documentation for passengers including tickets, accommodation vouchers and itineraries were issued, further reinforced her belief in the concept of tailoring product offerings.

Julie's career at Traveland / Viva Holidays continued to develop and she rose through the ranks to become PA to the Chairman and General Manager and then to assist the National Sales Manager. After four years an opportunity arose to work for Royal Orchid Holidays, a subsidiary of Thai Airways International, managing Sydney and Brisbane group tour departures. She applied and was successful. Again it was not long before her talents were noted and she rose to become Marketing Development and Creative Services Manager for Australia and New Zealand for parent company Thai International.

For ten years Julie worked for Thai, managing multi-million dollar budgets, planning national media spend, producing marketing collateral and managing major promotional events. Eventually, almost constant national and international travel and a heavy schedule of commitments began to compromise her ability to care for her two children under 2 and the decision was made to step back and spend more time at home.

In January 1996 Julie launched Blue Sky Solutions, a company specialising in marketing and public relations. This would be a home based business and the idea was to continue to practice what she loved but in a way that would allow her to care more comprehensively for her family. Her reputation and experience saw the company grow quickly and before long she was working with a diverse range of clients including sporting clubs, marketing specialists and even the management of performing artists. In May 1999, one of her key clients, Stadium Australia, eventually saw merit in offering Julie full time work. This was an opportunity not to be missed and with her family's blessing, she accepted the invitation and became the face of the stadium's corporate hospitality program.





From its first launch event through to its post Olympics transformation Julie managed a program as diverse as could be imagined. In addition to the Olympic celebrations there were rugby tests, rugby league grand finals, state of origin games, soccer internationals and even a rumba music concert.

Whilst this period of Julie's working career was both exciting and rewarding, it took her away from aviation which was still very much a passion albeit a recessed passion. This was not to last and as fate would have it, an opportunity arose to re-connect. The opportunity was the position of Charter Sales Manager being advertised by Hawker Pacific Aircraft Charter. 'I saw this as a chance to blend my kerosene addiction with my hospitality and senior management contacts' recalls Julie, 'it was an opportunity I felt I couldn't let pass'.

The five years Julie spent with Hawker Pacific, rising eventually to the role of General Manager, Aircraft Management and Charter allowed her to refine her skills in the aviation context, liaising with and negotiating travel arrangements for, owners, pilots and blue chip clients. The role also allowed her to consider how aircraft charter might be approached in a different way, re-kindling her belief in the importance of individually tailoring solutions. Effectively, it took her back to the fundamentals she had learned as a child and drove her to re-launch Blue Sky Solutions as a niche air charter business. 'I guess I looked at

the way aircraft charter was being offered and there were some things that didn't sit with who I was and what I wanted to do' Julie recalls, 'to me it was important to offer the very best service at all times and I didn't always see this happening. I realized therefore, that if I wanted to deliver the sort of charter experience I thought was right, I needed to do it myself'.

Five years later and with a growing client base, Blue Sky Solutions is now firmly established as a premium service provider in the corporate charter market. The company's unique approach and its commitment to tailored solutions continue to accurately reflect Julie Abbott's core values. 'I always listen to what my clients want and then find the best aircraft to suit their needs. I'm doing things a bit differently by not owning or operating the aircraft I charter. This way I become the client's advocate, I can transact with complete independence and be quite discerning when choosing the right operators'.

Julie Abbott sees a bright future for aircraft charter and is confident that her decision to enter the market will be beneficial in the long term. 'Aircraft charter is definitely beginning to appeal more broadly. People are beginning to understand the benefits, especially PA's who are now more educated about their choices. They play an incredibly important role and they are now beginning to ask the right questions.'

## Latrobe Regional Airport – The New Home For Your Helicopter Business

Latrobe Regional Airport is the aviation hub for the Gippsland region of Victoria and helicopters play an important and expanding role here. During the summer fire season up to 20 helicopters, including the Erickson skycranes, can be seen operating from the airport. In addition Latrobe is home to the Helimed (HEMS2) helicopter ambulance and rescue operation for the south eastern area of Victoria.

Latrobe Regional Airport general manager, Neil Cooper, says that a unique investment opportunity now exists in the heart of the region with 200 ha of prime aviation development land with freeway and rail access directly to Melbourne in close proximity, available for subdivision and subsequent sale.

"Recent development and expansion has created new opportunities to attract new aviation businesses to the region" says Mr Cooper, "our large private hangar precinct, expanding commercial airpark and multimillion dollar expansion of facilities and infrastructure make it an ideal place to locate your business. With the assistance of State and Federal Government funding, and the support of Latrobe City Council, \$6.2 million is being spent on upgrades to facilities and infrastructure. These upgrades include a new NDB, new runway lighting system including PAPI, resurfacing of the main runway and all apron and parking areas, upgrades to several taxiways and a new multipurpose helipad and parking area."

Offering business opportunities for all aviation compatible industries, Latrobe Regional Airport has a large industry base, excellent infrastructure already in place, and fully serviced land to suit individual corporate requirements. The region is recognised as dynamic,

vibrant and progressive and offers:-

- **Low cost operations:** Aviation users and operators have the opportunity to benefit from significant savings when compared to other locations.
- **'Ready to go' development opportunities:** Prime land is ready for development with fully serviced blocks that can be tailored to suit your requirements and an efficient development approval process.
- **An established workforce:** The region has a large industrial base and a skilled workforce ready to embrace future growth opportunities.
- **Commitment to expansion:** Latrobe City Council is committed to the development of a new and exciting airport master plan.
- **Land ideally suited for helicopter businesses:** Large blocks with direct access to the main runway make Latrobe Regional Airport an attractive investment proposition.

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- AFRU Beep Back,
- JET A1 and AVGAS available 24/7,
- A modern air-conditioned terminal building,
- A sealed public car-park,
- On-site aircraft construction and maintenance facilities,
- Emergency facilities including State Emergency Services, Country Fire Authority, Department of Environment and Primary Industries fire bomber base and Helimed helicopter ambulance and rescue regional centre,

Latrobe Regional Airport is seeking to expand its helicopter presence and is offering land packages at very competitive prices to potential helicopter operators and maintenance businesses seeking to invest in this vibrant and progressive Victorian regional centre.

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## The R66 – Frank Robinson’s ‘Game Changer’

On August 10, 2010 Frank Robinson, founder of Robinson Helicopter Company and its long term President and Board Chairman announced his retirement.

Robinson had intended to retire on his 80th birthday in January 2010, but elected to postpone the decision until the design of the company’s latest product, the R66 Turbine, was complete. No doubt he thought this was the right thing to do. Perhaps, as is most likely the case, he wanted to make sure that the R66 delivered the goods, in other words that it would be not just evolutionary but perhaps even revolutionary. The assumption has to be that he was satisfied that the R66 ticked both boxes.

Preliminary design of the R66 began in 2001 but engineering began in earnest in 2005 when Robinson reached an agreement with Rolls-Royce to develop the RR300 turbine engine. He had considered other power plant options, but ultimately collaborated with Rolls-Royce on the RR300, a derivative of the Rolls-Royce 250 engine series. The partnership was, no doubt, a product of Robinson’s reputation and certainly strong evidence of his influence. Perhaps it was logical progression as much as the opportunity for commercial benefit that drove the negotiations but it obviously hit a sweet spot.

The concept of the R66 is the same that launched the R22 in 1979 and the R44 in 1992 – it was to be a helicopter designed to perform as well or better than its competitors but for a lot less money. This was Robinson’s underpinning rationale, a simple requirement that eventually drove his company to become one of the most influential players in the rotary marketplace.

On October 25, 2010, three years and eight months after Robinson Helicopter publicly announced plans to develop a five-seat turbine helicopter and less than three months after his retirement, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) presented Frank Robinson with a Type Certificate for the much anticipated R66. This would have been a great moment for Robinson and one that officially brought to a close a very distinguished career.

For Stephen Boyce, Oceania Aviation Group’s Sales Manager and a very experienced Kiwi rotary pilot, the R66’s certification by Transport Canada in May this year was of particular interest. Now based in Auckland, Boyce cut his teeth in this part of the world and has spent a considerable part of his career flying in arctic and sub-arctic latitudes. He knows how extreme the operating environment can be. ‘I was pleased to see the recent acceptance of the R66 by Transport Canada and I’m eager to see what new and interesting uses the Canadians might have for this impressive machine’ he says. ‘There is a commonality between our countries, in how we view and use helicopters, but Canada is going to put the R66 through its paces as they will be operating it at higher altitudes and in colder climates. After years of utility flying up there, I know the Canadians are looking hard at the performance of the model and comparing the external lift capacity and running costs to the Bell 206 and EC120’.

In an effort to determine if the R66 was in fact cutting it in the challenging Canadian environment, Stephen Boyce decided to call a former colleague Eric Gould, who has owned, operated and sold dozens of Robinsons. It was clear from the conversation the two had that Gould was impressed. ‘Eric mentioned that because he needed to understand how the R66 could change the turbine market in the region he had flown over 120 hours in their demonstrator around the operators in the mountains of British Columbia and into the dry heat of Alberta. The message was that every one was seriously impressed about the performance, solid feedback that reinforced the capability of the type

as an option against the incumbent light turbine fleet for utility and private use’.

It would be fair to assume that what the R66 is promising to deliver was always on Frank Robinson’s radar, that it could mix it with the best in the incumbent light turbine market. Peter Riedl, Robinson’s Chief Engineer, confirms this but even he is surprised by the R66’s emerging capability. ‘Because we were not working to a hard deadline, we had the opportunity to refine and optimize the design. The performance of the aircraft, so far, has met or exceeded all of our expectations’, says Riedl.

The R66 incorporates many of the design features of its reputable predecessor, the R44, including a two-bladed rotor system, T-bar cyclic flight controls and an open interior cabin configuration. The most notable differences are its increased reserve power, increased altitude performance, fifth seat and large baggage compartment. Popular upgrades including HID landing lights, leather seats, and a stereo audio control panel are standard in the R66.

What seriously impresses Stephen Boyce, however, is the R66’s ability to handle external loads. ‘The addition of a hook is really going to give the R66 a competitive edge. Eric Gould is hopeful they will have the Onboard Systems Hook STC soon and expects the coming 2014 season to be outstanding for the brand. Again I’ll be interested in the feedback’.

One area of concern Stephen Boyce has is recent negative press about the Type and an element of suspicion beginning to filter through. Eric Gould’s feedback has been reassuring but still seeking further assurances, he asked Gould for additional testimony. This was delivered in letter Gould received from Richard Alzetta, a pilot with over 21,000 hours flying experience, much in the mountains of Europe, Alaska, Asia and Canada. The following is an extract from the letter Alzetta wrote after flying an R66 in the area West of Calgary in the Canadian Rockies in late September this year:

*‘The following is the little write up I promised about flying the R66 in the mountains. You can use it as you wish for promoting this remarkable helicopter.’*

*‘With more than 7,000 hours on Robinson Helicopters (my first purchase from Eric was the R44 Astro), I really wanted to try the R66 especially in the mountains, which is where I am the happiest flying. Firstly, I was really impressed by the aircraft’s quality of construction and the attention to little*

*details like lights on the side glass of the hydraulic reservoir and transmission, the single point refuelling with a sturdy fuel cap, the large baggage compartment and many other changes from the R44 Raven II. A nice touch was the middle back seat that can be easily replaced by a plug with two armrests and cup holders, giving this helicopter an executive look... very cool!*

*I wanted to experience for myself what it would be like to fly it in the mountains with a good average load and up to 12,000 feet where most flying in the Rockies would take place. Eric Gould had already done Max Gross 10,000 feet hover OGE with pedal turns so we did not duplicate that.*

*I flew it with Luke Yanik, and also Bill McMullen (a pilot friend) as an observer. We started with a full fuel load and were working in the mountains with 3/4 fuel. Our total weight was 2,360 lbs (340 lbs below max weight). This was what I planned as it would be a very realistic weight for someone taking two friends hiking or heli-fishing. It also showed that we could have carried another 200 pounds plus backpacks and still be below max.*

*We climbed to approximately 12,000 feet using 75% torque and about 70 to 75 knots airspeed. We landed at 11,200 feet with no problem at all and later hovered out of ground effect at 12,000 feet using 82% torque with lots of MGT available and lots of tail rotor authority left and right. We also landed later, on a pinnacle at 9,000 feet which was no problem.*

*For someone who likes to go hiking, the R66, I find, would be the ideal machine, simple, reliable and turbine powered with excellent performance and ease of maintenance. I do not know of any light turbine helicopter that can match it for price and performance. It was a really great experience and I would strongly recommend it’.*

There is strong evidence to suggest that the R66 may be the game changer Frank Robinson was hoping for, particularly given its high altitude performance, speed and external load capacity. Stephen Boyce is confident that it is and is pleased to offer the Type as part of his sales portfolio. ‘The R66 is a cost competitive aircraft with full warranty, affordable direct operating costs [DOC] and we are offering a full support package through Skysales Aviation in Christchurch. We’re very optimistic about the future of this very capable and versatile utility aircraft’.



The Oceania Aviation Group is an authorised Robinson Helicopter dealer (sales & service) with support facilities in Auckland, Christchurch and Queenstown.





## Cairns Aviation Skills Centre Launches ATPL Theory Training For Pilots

Aviation Australia's Cairns Aviation Skills Centre (CASC) has launched ATPL theory training for pilots.

The introduction of this training is in response to market demands as a result of the new CASR Part 61 ATPL licensing requirements.

Partnered with Rob Avery Training Products, CASC is now offering the full seven subjects with the four most challenging subjects delivered in-class full time commencing 10th February 2014. The remaining three subjects will be offered through distance learning and are fully supported with training materials and a student helpline.

Assessment Services Limited (ASL) has also approved CASC to provide ATPL examinations on campus. Chris Pigott, Business Manager CASC said "Our ATPL students can now sit their CASA ASL exams in house at the completion of each module on site. Students will also have access to

a fully operational Falcon-10 jet systems training device which is located on campus. Aviation Australia is a world leader in aviation training for all aspects of aircraft maintenance engineering and cabin crew training, and is now pleased to be offering innovative training solutions for pilots".

*"A world leader in aviation training for all aspects of aircraft maintenance engineering and cabin crew training"*

Rob Avery said, "I am very pleased with Aviation Australia's decision to utilise my company's ATPL training products in this exciting new initiative. This initiative provides pilots with a substantiated training option allowing a hassle free ATPL training course and the underpinning 'command knowledge' which is required by airlines."

For further information visit:  
[www.aviationaustralia.aero/pilot](http://www.aviationaustralia.aero/pilot)  
 or email: [atpl@aviationaustralia.aero](mailto:atpl@aviationaustralia.aero)

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## AHIA President's Report –

### CASA – A Step Too Far – Too Fast – CASR 61?

Peter Crook

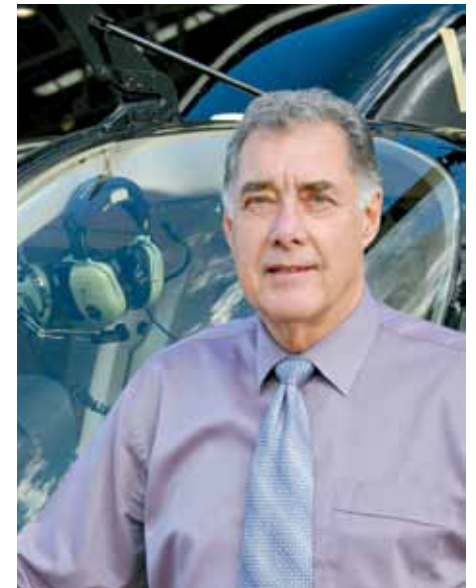
As the calendar year draws to a close, the AHIA has just celebrated its first birthday on 8 November.

You can read of our achievements and activities in this edition of Airwaves – see 'First Annual Report for AHIA'. I would like to thank fellow Board members, Mark Scrymgeour, VP and Rob Rich, Secretary, our sponsors and volunteers who have enabled us to achieve so much in such a short time. Well done. All have given so much of their time to discuss and negotiate with CASA the implementation of CASR Part 61 (Flight Crew Training) and the deeply troubled MoS which is not yet suitable for the helicopter industry despite a start date of 4 December 2013.

On the 19 November 2013 CASA released their welcome decision CASR Part 61 would be delayed until the 1 September 2014. But the wording caught the dozen members of the AHIA's review team off guard when the regulator stated, "Despite CASA's education and information campaign on the new licensing regulations many pilots and people working in flying training are only starting to understand the new rules. While the new regulations do not make major changes to existing practices it is clear more time for education and information communication is required".

Unfortunately, this assertion is wrong, because the claimed lack of understanding was due to the large number of problems with the MoS released to industry in June with an eight week deadline for comments. But the MoS is very confusing in parts, and the demands being placed on the helicopter training industry will incur enormous costs in order to comply – a very worrying situation. In reply to CASA's media release, I would like to set the record straight by referring to the action of the AHIA's review team.

Chairperson of the AHIA's CASR Part 61 (MoS) working group, Mark Scrymgeour, recruited a team of top trainers in the industry to help with the MoS review. This team includes Ray Cronin, Kestrel Aviation; Mike Becker, Becker Helicopters; Brett Newman, Professional Helicopter Services; Graeme Gillies, Blue Tongue Helicopters and Colin Clarke, Heliwest. Our CASA Liaison Officer is Dale South. It quickly became



obvious the MoS and its parent CASR Part 61 did not line up in some areas thus causing confusion to the key players (many are business operators). The implementation of the new Part 141 (traditional) and Part 142 (new integrated) schools was not well received, as it required a revamp of the instructors' qualifications and the introduction of instrument flying in the basic flying courses. As very few of our 27 active flying schools have helicopters equipped for NVFR or IFR training, this may result in some smaller schools closing at a time when aircrew shortages are looming once again.

*"It is clear more time for education and information communication is required"*

In October, Senator David Fawcett attended AHIA's Offshore Symposium in Sydney. He became concerned at the matters raised at the CASR Part 61 Workshop. Attendees included both industry and CASA project officers. Recently

Senator Fawcett made contact with the AHIA and obtained a thorough briefing on the progress of the review team and the proposed legislation effective on 4 December 2013. The Senator who is an ex-Army pilot and the holder of a civilian ATPL(H) licence on multi-engine helicopters, assessed the situation and later met with senior government officials. Hopefully, he was impressed with the findings of AHIA's working group. Mark Scrymgeour advised Senator David Fawcett that: "CASA is not yet ready for Part 61!"



*Peter Crook, President of the AHIA, lives in Sydney and has an extensive knowledge of both aeroplane and helicopter operations. Peter knows in detail current rotorcraft capabilities. He has fostered a close relationship with CASA to ensure proposed legislation does not hamper the growth of the Australian helicopter industry.*





## Opportunity Knocks But Only For Those Prepared To Listen

Paul Tyrrell

It is well documented that a literate and trained population is fundamental to the chances of any developing country achieving some level of prosperity. The 21st century is a technological age and countries that understand this concept will advance.

Connecting this argument to Australia's aviation industry and the regions to our north opens up a wide range of possibilities. The Asian middle-class is growing and they want to purchase high-tech goods and to travel. What developed in Europe and North America in the 20th century will be replicated in Asia throughout this century.

Australia has a mature aviation industry on the edge of the world's fastest growing markets. Certainly, Australia can supply aviation goods to this market but it is the

services side that might prove to be the most sustainable. Pilots, engineers, cabin crew, airport managers, financial and security specialists, to name just a few professions, all will need to be trained to high standards. This will mean serious aviation engagement with a growing number of Asian countries, building on the ex-pat aviation network already established. The training could occur in-country or through specialist training institutions in Australia, the latter already underway within a number of companies.

If we are to become really serious it will mean Australian aviation companies committing to using native language speakers, or foreign language training for their interlocutors, and a deeper understanding of the culture of specific countries. This all comes at a price and it is not cheap but aviation engagement with Asia must contain a long-term approach, even cross-generational. It will mean a considerable adjustment in thinking for investors and markets given that short-term returns are unlikely.

Australia cannot rely simply on its proximity to the Asian aviation markets to keep its competitors at bay. International companies are well and truly alive to what aviation can bring to the region and will compete ruthlessly for their share of the market. However, Australia is close by, has strong training credentials and a sound aviation safety culture. Certainly the dollar is high which does not always

help, but it will be the quality of the training products that may be the final determinant for potential customers.

Rather than backing away, Australian aviation training companies should be accelerating their engagement with the new aviation nations to our north. In some cases this is already occurring. The increased focus must not contain a carpet-bagger mentality, something that a few Australian companies and institutions were accused of in the 80s and 90s, but as committed business partners who are in the aviation relationship for the long-term.

Let's look at some practical steps. Has our industry made full use of Austrade, the Department of Industry and our various trade missions? Our hard-earned taxes support these institutions; do we as an industry engage effectively with them? New Zealand has developed a successful aviation export organisation, with their combined industry and government as equal partners. This model should be studied closely and a similar partnership established here. Having a government partner or form of imprimatur is an asset in many Asian business relationships.

Australia enjoys almost endless airspace as well as very mature engineering and flight instructor sectors. Are they under-utilised resources? Training airports abound, particularly west of the Great Dividing Range. For example, Parkes NSW,

with its long and mostly empty runways would be an ideal site for extensive ab-initio and commercial training. With the right policies, respectful engagement and smart investment Australia could meet many of Asia's aviation training needs for the foreseeable future.

While China is the regional powerhouse and building airports at an impressive rate, our industry should not be blind to the many countries nearby who are also awakening to aviation's potential. A seismic regional economic and political shift is occurring on our door-step and our aviation industry must be alive to it. Being an island nation sometimes tends to turn our focus inwards. Our industry should lift its gaze and engage closely with what is happening not far over our horizon. The next ten years will determine whether we have the stomach for it. In this writer's opinion, we do.

*Paul Tyrrell is CEO of The Regional Aviation Association of Australia, a not-for-profit organisation formed in 1980 to protect, represent & promote the combined interests of its regional airline members and regional aviation throughout Australia. The RAAA has 29 Ordinary Members (AOC holders) and 72 Associate/Affiliate Members. The RAAA's AOC members directly employ over 2,500 Australians, many in regional areas and on an annual basis jointly turnover more than \$1b. Its members also carry well in excess of 2 million passengers and move over 23 million kilograms of freight each year. More information including categories of membership can be found at [www.raaa.com.au](http://www.raaa.com.au).*

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## New Zealand Aviation: Practical, Innovative and Professional

John Nicholson

There are 882 helicopters in New Zealand, or one for every 5350 people. There are a lot of helicopters!

New Zealand is unique in the way the helicopter industry developed: our military has never had big helicopter fleets; and there has not been a steady stream of retired military pilots to drive the development of a commercial helicopter capability.

Our long and skinny country with its mountains had always presented many transport challenges. Many young Kiwis, men and some women, quickly recognised the potential of helicopters. Experimenting was rife; they tested boundaries and innovated – in terms of roles for helicopters, and equipment that was developed for them. The absence of a strong military ethos was a huge help!

Deer hunting by helicopter in the 1960s was followed some time later by the live recovery of animals. Our expertise in long lining started back in 1964 when helicopters were used to unload crayfish boats. It is not

surprising that our fixed wing top dressing expertise resulted in the early development of spray equipment for helicopters. Helicopters are now the dominant force in aerial agricultural applications

Those early pioneers probably developed the first underslung fire bucket and an operator, more recently, has developed a heat sensor to be fitted to a fire bucket to provide guidance to the pilot when smoke obscures the hot spot.

Innovation continues:

- Airwork has received an EASA STC approval for the BK117-850D Honeywell engine upgrade
- Oceania and others reconfigure helicopters
- National Aircraft Interiors and others fit-out helicopters
- Composite Helicopters and Auroa Helicopters have designed and are building composite helicopters
- Amuri Helicopters has developed precision bait dropping, especially in remote areas
- IMS New Zealand has designed and manufactured underslung load equipment - Ground-Effect Spreading/Seeder Buckets and Fire Fighting Buckets

Generations of New Zealanders have now learned to fly in the country. They have been joined by good numbers of international students. Today, New Zealanders and overseas pilots trained in New Zealand fly global skies. You find them delivering

to offshore platforms in the Philippines, working for Chinese companies in Cambodia, providing heli-skiing in India, driving stock in Australia, spraying crops in the United States and killing pests on South Georgia.

The training environment in New Zealand is ideal. Students learn to fly in diverse environments, from polar to tropical and over terrain ranging from water to deserts and mountains. The country's schools produce well-rounded pilots.

While the early operators could perhaps be described as 'cowboys', the industry today is characterised by its thorough professionalism. The New Zealand Helicopter Association (NZHA) was set up by the Aviation Industry Association (now Aviation New Zealand) in 2009 to provide an authoritative voice for the industry and to promote helicopter safety in the country.

In 2011, the NZHA and Aviation Industry Association launched AIRCARE™. This is an integrated accreditation programme for aviation businesses. It brings flight safety, environmental safety and other safety related functions together in one safety assurance programme. In doing so, it rationalises many of the aviation compliance requirements.

Aircraft operators are generally well versed in applying solid risk management procedures to flight safety. AIRCARE™ gets them to use those same techniques to

manage environmental safety, transport of patients, fire fighting and pilot training. There are a number of standards to which organisations can be accredited, depending on what activities they undertake, but the common theme - all participating organisations are required to have sound risk management processes.

The Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement (TTMRA) presents real opportunities to transfer professionals between Australia and New Zealand. Operators on either side of the Tasman can now look across 'the ditch' to get necessary flight crew and engineering personnel.

Innovation characterised the development of the early helicopter industry in New Zealand. We had to innovate because of our comparative isolation. In today's connected world, the innovation still occurring in New Zealand is more likely to be marketed to global markets. It is also backed up by a thoroughly professional NZHA and AIRCARE™, along with the discipline of the CAA.

*John Nicholson is CEO of Aviation New Zealand, a peak industry body that champions New Zealand companies and product/service solutions to international audiences. It encourages the development of scale through collaboration and connects international customers to product and service solutions developed in New Zealand. The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of the NZ Aviation Industry Association. Visit [www.aviationnz.co.nz](http://www.aviationnz.co.nz) for full company details.*

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## Heliwest Services – In Pursuit of Excellence

A decision to focus on excellence in customer service has seen the Heliwest Group, Western Australia's largest on-shore helicopter operator, launch a new entity that will manage the enterprise's growing sales and service activities.

Now in its sixth month of operation, Heliwest Services, led by General Manager Ronnie Fahy, is focusing on building capability in four key areas:

- Parts Support,
- Aircraft Sales and Acquisition,
- Maintenance Repair and Overhaul and,
- Aircraft Appraisals.

Holding a Commercial Pilot's Licence and with NAAA accreditation as an aircraft appraiser, Ronnie Fahy brings considerable expertise to the Heliwest team. His previous roles as the Heliwest Group's Customer Relations Manager and Aircraft Sales and Acquisitions Manager have also provided Fahy with a comprehensive understanding of the group's mission, culture and operational framework.

What drove the launch of Heliwest Services was the feedback Ronnie Fahy received after having travelled extensively both in Australia and Internationally. 'What became obvious to me over time was that the level of service the industry was delivering, although high in quality and provided by experienced people, was somewhat lacking in customer focus. I discussed this at length with most operators in the region and the trend became very clear. Support could be better. I think all the major OEM's are aware of this now and they all have plans to improve'.

Armed with substantial evidence, the decision was made to launch a company that would provide a level of support not yet provided to helicopter operators in the region. The decision appears to have paid off. 'Feedback thus far has been very positive, says Fahy. 'The overwhelming response from customers has been "it's great that you actually care about our business"'.

One of Heliwest Services' key competitive strategies is to provide access to the company's suite of capabilities 24/7 and 364 days per year. 'All our customers have our mobile numbers and we are happy to take calls after hours and on weekends' says Ronnie Fahy. 'In fact we have personnel in the office on Saturdays specifically to cover our customer's weekend

AOG needs. I say 364 days per year, but in fact if somebody needed something on Christmas Day I'd be happy to take their call.

The most significant accreditation received by Heliwest Services to date is Bell Helicopter's endorsement as an approved service facility. Ronnie Fahy explains. 'The accreditation process took two years and we were told by many in the industry that it would not be possible for us to become an accredited Bell Customer Service Facility. This provided us with additional incentive and when the approval came through we took great pride in the achievement, in being able to reach goals others deemed to be impossible'.

The commitment made to achieve the Bell Helicopter accreditation is strong evidence of the team's belief in its mission, a belief shared by all in the Heliwest Group. 'This degree of commitment and the high standards we endeavour to achieve can be seen in activities throughout the whole group' says Ronnie Fahy, 'it's an essential element in Heliwest's corporate vision. It's fair to say that the industry recognizes that Bell has the best customer service processes in place and they are continually improving their standards. That fitted nicely with our own objectives and having access to their resources has been a key element in developing and delivering our own improvement goals'.

The Bell accreditation will not restrict Heliwest Services from working with other OEM's. 'One of our key advantages is that we work very well with all OEM's' says Ronnie Fahy. 'For instance, we have an extremely co-operative relationship with Eurocopter through Australian Aerospace and work with them on a daily basis. They have a great team at the helm there now and I find their people, like the Bell people, extremely easy to work with. It's our intention to continue to work closely with Australian Aerospace in key areas well into the future'.

Whilst the impact of the GFC is still being felt in many parts of the industry, Heliwest Services is continuing to grow, supported by the Heliwest Group's commitment to invest in both infrastructure and inventory. A new state of the art engineering workshop was completed and commissioned in late July and a substantial parts and equipment inventory is now in place. 'One thing the Heliwest Group is not afraid to do is invest in new opportunities' says Ronnie Fahy. 'The size of our inventory is a good example. The supply of helicopter parts and parts support has always been core business and we are continually sourcing parts to support the aircraft we service. Although I'm not prepared to put a figure on our investment in inventory, I will say that if you want a Bell 206, 206L, B0105, AS350 or Bell 427 part we have it. That I personally find to be very impressive and there are not many organisations worldwide who could make that claim'.

Growth in aircraft sales and acquisitions and aircraft appraisal services has also



been strong. 'In the last six months we have provided six helicopters to customers in the region, four of which have gone to New Zealand' says Ronnie Fahy. 'And there's more in the pipeline. Not bad for a depressed market. And with Western Australia's only NAAA affiliated appraisers on staff we are now also providing very detailed and accurate fixed wing and rotary appraisals for both financial institutions and aircraft owners. This is an area of our business which is growing considerably. It is an area of the industry which is very mature in the U.S. but not so in Australasia. The growth potential here is therefore significant'.

Now, with a well-established national footprint, eyes are looking further afield and the future looks bright. 'We are building a dedicated Heliwest Services website which will have some very innovative ways of interacting with our clients' says Ronnie Fahy, 'and we are actively sourcing new products. We will continue to be different. Our strategy is very simple, to have the best people delivering the best service. We still have a way to go and we will undoubtedly hit some hurdles along the way, but we are looking forward to getting over them because every hurdle we jump delivers an improvement.'

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## High Award For SA Flying Ace

South Australian flying ace Chris Sperou received an honour of the highest kind in October when he was presented with the prestigious Australian Bi-Centennial Award from the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in the UK.

The award, which recognises an outstanding individual contribution to Australian aviation, couldn't be more fitting for Chris who is Australia's most outstanding aerobatic pilot and has been an air show favourite for 40 years.

Besides holding 13 Australian National Aerobatic Champion titles and being a seven-time member of the champion aerobatics formation team, Chris has flown 35 different types of aircraft, performed from Russia to America, and been the stunt pilot for several movies. Chris was awarded for his ongoing contribution to the art of sport aerobatic flying at a gala banquet held at London's medieval Guildhall. The event was attended by 700 leading air crew members involved in military, commercial and civil aviation.

Among those in attendance was Grand Master of the Guild, HRH The Duke of York, Prince Andrew – who flew helicopters as a decoy for Exocet missiles fired at British forces by Argentine troops during the 1982 Falklands War – and Captain Jim Lovell, Commander of the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission to the moon, who uttered those famous words “Houston we have a problem”. Lovell skilfully brought his crippled Apollo 13 spacecraft and crew safely back to Earth following an in-space explosion. While 400,000 kilometres from Earth, en route to the moon.

Chris was the first Australian pilot to be granted permission to fly aerobatics down to ground level and the first to fly the spectacular ‘inverted ribbon cut’ which he executes, inverted, just 25 feet above ground level. One of his most memorable flying experiences was reaching a speed

of 750 kilometres an hour in a low-level dive, in an historic, propeller-driven Sea Fury, while demonstrating the aeroplane above the Adelaide Grand Prix.

On another occasion, during an aerobatic performance above Darwin Harbour, a rudder cable snapped on Chris' Pitts Special aircraft. When he was about to bail out Chris remembered that the waters below were home to large crocodiles and deadly box jellyfish. At this point he may have well muttered “Darwin we have a problem!” But Chris immediately wrapped the broken cable around one hand and then awkwardly, but successfully, landed the stricken aircraft at Darwin airport. This extraordinary feat of airmanship and courage only goes to show why Chris has been recognised on the international stage.



Chris has operated a successful loss adjusting firm in Adelaide for the past 40 years. In his professional capacity he has provided great support and expertise to QBE (through AAUP/AAIG previously) and the general aviation industry in SA, WA and NT.

QBE congratulates Chris on this deserved recognition on the world stage for excellence and service to aviation and thanks him for his service and friendship over this lengthy period of time.

Well done Chris from your friends at QBE.

For further information, please contact Julian Fraser, National Relationship Manager - Aviation (03) 8602 9904.



Australian Government  
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

## Overseeing Safety— Sport Aviation

Sport aviation, a term which encompasses a variety of light aviation from fixed wing to flex wing to gyros, gliders to ballooning, hang gliding, parachuting, warbirds and models, represents almost half of all aviation activity in Australia.

An Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) study (AR-2013-067) released in late October 2013, states that in the years 2003–2012, reporting of safety incidents in this sector grew tenfold, largely reflecting significant change in Australian recreational aviation. ‘More pilots, are taking up the opportunities offered by recreational aviation as opposed to using VH-registered aircraft’, the reports says, based on factors such as ‘aircraft purchase and operating cost, maintenance, access to training, and licensing requirements’. Sadly, this growth is reflected in a corresponding increase in sport aviation accidents and incidents, including 21 fatalities in 2013 (as at October 2013).

The greatest number of incidents involving recreational aviation in reports to the ATSB involved airspace incursions in controlled airspace, generally reported by air traffic control; with the remaining incidents involving restricted airspace in Western Australia; Edinburgh, South Australia; and Amberley, Queensland.

In 2013, CASA's sport aviation office, SASAO (or more accurately, the Self-Administering Sport Aviation Organisations' section), doubled its efforts to improve sport aviation's safety performance.

The sport aviation team is now a regular sight at the many recreational aviation fly-ins around the country, such as the annual Easter NatFly; the September 2013 AusFly at Narromine; as well as the many smaller gatherings of sport aviation enthusiasts held regularly. At these events, the sport

aviation team works with the various sport organisations to raise awareness of safety issues such as aircraft airworthiness, being appropriately qualified and certified, and well prepared for a flight by checking weather and notams (notices to airmen).

Kevin Scrimshaw, CASA safety assurance officer in the sport aviation office, says ‘when we first started doing ramp checks at these events, we were treated with scepticism, but now we have a lot of support. It's turning people's thinking around, and they see ramp checks for what they are: a way of educating pilots, of giving us assurance that you're meeting safety requirements. If you deliberately break the rules, we'll enforce them. If pilots are doing the right thing, then it won't be an issue.

Ramp checks are an important element of every aviation regulator's surveillance functions, and the multi-disciplinary sport aviation team also takes the opportunity of these gatherings to give presentations, and have talked to pilot groups on topics such as ‘Demystifying ramp checks’ and the range of safety resources CASA produces for pilots and engineers, such as Out-n-Back, OnTrack and the flight planning kit, and to talk one-on-one with sport aviation participants.

Where pilots who have been ramp checked are members of one of the sport aviation organisations such as Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus); the Australian Sports Rotorcraft Association (ASRA), or the Hangliding Federation of Australia (HGFA), CASA provides a synopsis to the respective organisation, in the interests of highlighting such issues and communicating them to their members. ‘While, for example, Scrimshaw explains, ‘the majority of pilots who have been ramp checked have been carrying electronic flight bags (EFBs) and also carrying charts as a redundancy if their EFB fails, some pilots are still not adequately prepared, either carrying no charts, or ones that are out of date.’

SASAO is also taking a holistic approach to sport aviation safety, encouraging the uptake of safety management systems in the various sport aviation organisations in anticipation of the requirements expected to be reflected in CASR Part 149.







Simon McDermott is interviewed by local media representatives following the award ceremony

## Group Bravery Citation For Team McDermott

Father and son team John and Simon McDermott have received citations from the Queensland Government for their efforts in helping to rescue numerous people from the raging flood waters that hit Queensland's Lockyer Valley in January 2011.

The citations were delivered by the Queensland Governor Penelope Wensley at a ceremony at Government House on September 24th 2013.

The citation reads as follows:

*On the afternoon of 10 January 2011, the flight crew of Firebird 460 responded as part of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) response during the Queensland flood events in the Lockyer Valley. Over two days they conducted rescue operations in strong gusting winds, torrential rain and poor visibility. They conducted reconnaissance flights through the Lockyer Valley, flying grids, and plotting the location of numerous people who required rescuing. This vital information was provided to the crew of Helitack 220. Throughout the two days of operations, the two helicopter crews conducted 47 rescues, including one rescue where 12 people were evacuated from a roof top by hover emplane.*

*For their actions, the recipients are recognised by the award of the Group Bravery Citation.*

Piloting 'Firebird 460' a Eurocopter AS355 twin squirrel ironically equipped for contract fire work, John McDermott with his son Simon and QFRS rescue coordinator Ben Sutherland as crew, worked in concert with the crew of Helitack 220, a BK117, in support of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's response during the

flood events. The airmanship of the Firebird 460 and Helitack 220 teams was considered extraordinary with both crews operating at times when many other helicopter service providers chose not to fly. It was acknowledged that the crews flew in conditions considered 'marginal' at best, and located many people in need of assistance and ensured their rescue by either helicopter or by notifying ground crews of their locations.

For Simon McDermott, the operation remains a vivid memory and one unlikely to be forgotten. Looking back on the two day operation, he considers that his father's detailed knowledge of the area was the key factor that helped them combat the difficult conditions. 'The weather was appalling and you couldn't see much' he says, 'it was so bad that when we were pulling in, other choppers were pulling out altogether because of low visibility. The only reason we could keep going was because dad had been flying around the area for more than 30 years. His extensive knowledge of the landscape certainly proved invaluable.'

Both John and Simon are very proud recipients of the citations which came as a complete surprise. 'You never expect this sort of thing' says Simon. 'We felt, despite the circumstances, that what we were doing was what was expected of us, that we should respond to people in need. It's a part of everyday life for us given the type of work we do. We were there to do a job and you really don't stop to think too much about whether or not your work is going to be formally acknowledged. Having said that, it is an incredible buzz for dad and me.'

Despite the accolades, life has returned to normal for the McDermotts, John continuing to manage one of Australia's largest contract helicopter operations, and Simon developing a new company subsidiary Machjet International, a premium air charter and freight corporation based at Sunshine Coast airport. 'You could say that the citation was a welcome distraction' says Simon, 'but it's now back to business for both of us. Having said that, we'd do it all again without question if the circumstances arose'.

## Pacific Crown Helicopters Completes Fit Out Of Australia's First EC130T2

The first Australian Eurocopter 130T2 was delivered to Pacific Crown Helicopters at Caloundra, Qld, on 16 September 2013 for completion.

The helicopter came from Eurocopter's headquarters in Marignane, France and the fit out work was done on behalf of Australian Aerospace and was delivered to their customer on 1 December 2013.

The single engine Eurocopter EC130T2 was developed from the AS350 Squirrel. The EC130T2 is a wide body variant of the AS350 B3 and was first flown in June 1999 by Australian test pilot, Steven Page. The EC130T2 features an enclosed tail fan (Fenestron) rather than the traditional tail rotor found on the older AS350 rotorcraft. The unevenly spaced blades create 50% less noise when compared to a tail rotor which is a significant advantage when operating in noise sensitive areas.

As result of the spacious cabin with excellent visibility and capable of accommodating seven passengers, the EC130 family is very popular with tourist operators. Blue Hawaiian Helicopters was the launch operator in 2001, and the EC130 is now a common sight in Hawaii and the Grand Canyon. Due to the spacious cabin, the EC130 is becoming popular with aero medical services. Two stretchers can be accommodated. In 2012, Eurocopter received orders for 50 EC130T2 from Maverick Helicopters. Other customers such as Papillon and Blue Hawaiian have taken the order book well past 100.

A closer look will show more than 70% the EC130T2's airframe has been modified from the existing EC130 B4 model. This was the result of installing a more powerful Arriel 2D turboshaft engine and an upgraded main gearbox. Performance has been significantly improved. A higher maximum gross takeoff



An EC130T2 arrives at Pacific Crown Helicopters from France as a "green" machine ready for assembly, painting and fit out to customer's needs and later delivery by Australian Aerospace to their client.

weight has been authorized at 2,500kg for internal loads (3,050kg external loads). VNE is 155 knots and the cruise is stated as being 127 knots. Claimed endurance is almost 127 hours. Operators in hot and high areas such and PNG will enjoy the published HOGE of 9,675 and service ceiling of 23,000 feet. Australia's Mt Kosciusko is 7,301 feet so the HOGE performance at the top should have few restrictions.

VH-ZVB was delivered to Pacific Crown Helicopters "green" (the colour of the primer). The company then painted the aircraft in customer's paint scheme, added interior trim, fitted the avionics and carried out other modifications to enable the issue of a CofA from CASA.

Kangaroo leather is used for the seats as it is light, soft and ten times stronger than bovine leather. Pacific Crown also uses "Kool" black leather upon a customer's request as it is 20% cooler than normal black leather and is ideal when the cabin is exposed to direct sunlight.

Also installed were radios, Garmin digital audio panel and navigation system and Bose Headsets. Pacific Crown Helicopters can offer a wide range of avionics upgrades and other modifications. This includes OEM equipment such as GPS and TCAD. Custom instrument designs can be installed.

December will be a busy month as another EC130T2 is almost ready for delivery and a third "green" machine is due into the workshop ready for delivery in the New Year.



Almost finished. Final engine runs and checks. Fenestron is 50% quieter than an equivalent tailrotor, a good choice against the anti-noise lobby?





# HELICOPTERS IN FOCUS

## From The Helicopter Editor

**Will the market and regulator be kind to us in 2014?**

Early in 2013 the helicopter industry was enjoying a 10% growth rate; which suddenly slumped after the election was called. This often happens in a lot of industries as many businesses adopt a wait and see stance, wondering the outcome of the Federal Election. The long campaign identified an enormous case of over-spending by both the federal and state governments since the GFC. This high rate of spending was no doubt to shield the community from the GFC setbacks; and in good faith, our politicians kept spending beyond our means to keep people in jobs. To a certain extent we all gambled on the Chinese buying more resources to help pay back our increasing public debt. But it was a miscalculation. Today, all governments are reigning in spending and downsizing most public service agencies to stop the uncontrolled upward spiral of increasing debt, but yet the federal government is seeking an increase in government debt to \$500 billion – or \$21,000 for every living soul in Australia. And of course this situation hurts the rotary wing industry as evidenced by sales slowing; especially new machines. Most of the 6% long term growth comes from used helicopter purchases from overseas.

As an example, Queensland has the largest share (26%) of Australia's helicopters with 752 on the register. The state helicopter industry depends on the cattle industry, mining and energy resources and tourist operations as their main source of income. The Australian resources boom is not dead, just sleeping, and the sector will awake in three to five years, but it will be hard times until the turnaround. That was the view of leading bankers and commodity experts attending the Mining 2013 Resources Conference in Brisbane early in November. Not all news was bad, minerals are expected to hit good times again in 2015 and the coal providers should see good results in 2017 due to increased Chinese demand once again.

The regulator can also cause setbacks as the transition to EASA rules occurs. Of concern is CASR Part 61 (Flight Crew Licensing) effective on the 4 December 2013. It has a transition process of three years, requiring a restructure of the training industry. The AHIA is working with CASA to help the Manual of Standards (MoS) line up with CASR Part 61. It is a large project that will not be completed on 4 December 2013.

The President of the AHIA, Peter Crook asked CASA's John McCormick for assistance with the review and Dale South, Section Head Rotorcraft Standards from CASA's Flight Standards Branch was appointed as CASA's liaison officer to work with the AHIA. This has been a most productive arrangement and is considered to be a model for future reviews of draft legislation changing how we operate in Australia.



**Rob Rich – Helicopter Editor, AIRWAVES**

Unfortunately, despite an enormous effort by the AHIA and CASA, the CASR 61 review is nowhere near completed, and CASA is behind schedule in presenting expositions on how the new school structures will operate in detail. CASR 61 is effective on 4 December 2013. But cynics are asking – where is the safety case to justify the extra costs being imposed on the training industry?

But a more serious threat is lurking in 2014. Recently in Adelaide CASA advised industry on their concepts for drafting CASR Part 133 (Australian Air Operations – Rotorcraft), now Charter; and CASR Part 138 (Aerial Work operations – Rotorcraft). The Notices of Proposed Rule Making are due later in 2014. Some changes will modify the way we carry people including aero-medical patients, which will move from today's Aerial Work to the Charter Category. This triggers a lot of additional compliance requirements. Aerial Work operations will also be reclassified in some areas, with a new system of Operation Certificates replacing current AOC will be offered; most requiring CASA's approval.

But the immediate concern is the proposed performance standards and their impact on flying operations and various categories of helicopters. CASA's need to seek "harmonisation" with EASA's rules is not understood and the need to have forced landing areas during some flight regimes, especially during takeoff and landing is now subject to an AHIA working group to educate operators on the intent of the proposed legislation. See [www.bladeslapper.com](http://www.bladeslapper.com) to follow Richard Nest's excellent Q & A thread.

The NZ Helicopter Association recently questioned the EASA rules which restrict single engine helicopters, in particular, piston engine types, where they were considered less reliable than turbine equivalents. In a study of 800 worldwide helicopter accidents involving single engine helicopters the NZ study noted engine power loss was involved in only 18.4% of worldwide accidents. Statistically speaking the potential of a rotorcraft injuring a person on the ground is most unlikely. The new rules will require single engine turbine machines to have additional engine health monitoring equipment fitted.

**An extra cost – where is the cost versus safety evidence??**

## First Annual Report For AHIA

On 8 November 2013 the AHIA was one year old. We have provided here a brief overview of our major projects and current challenges.

The appointment by CASA of a liaison officer to help with our review of legislations was a very positive step. But assisting in the regulatory review process has shown CASA (by their own admission) has very few helicopter qualified people. The training industry has the hardest road to travel as there is still a lot of confusion about the transition processes and new school models. It appears schools at present now have the lowest enrolments for some time; and the output does not cover those leaving the industry.

**History in brief.** The AHIA steering committee was formed in March 2012 and the owners of [www.bladeslapper.com](http://www.bladeslapper.com) very kindly provided a forum where the concept of a new representative body to support industry could be debated. The original convenor was Rob Rich, now Company Secretary. A short time later Peter Crook and Mark Scrymgeour offered to help Rob with the steering committee work. After incorporation in November 2012, Peter became the President and Mark the Vice President.

**Major sponsor.** Ian Honnery, CEO, Aerospace Australia Limited (AAL) organizers of the Avalon Airshows offered

to be **Founding Corporate Patron of the Australian Helicopter Industry Association.** In September 2012 they announced a substantial sponsorship package to ensure the not-for-profit AHIA could quickly undergo the administrative processes. This was completed at the official launch on November 2012, where Peter, Mark and Rob were nominated as founding directors of the AHIA Limited, the legal work was provided by AAL at no cost and closely supervised by Ian Honnery.

**Media sponsor – Aviation Trader.** There was a need for a printed publication to act as the AHIA's official journal. Kevin Gosling, MD of Aviation Trader assisted by his Business Manager, Tony Shaw offered to launch their new 'Airwaves' magazine and contribute a significant proportion to the AHIA's needs. This enabled the helicopter industry's news to be circulated widely to both the aeroplane and helicopter industry.

**Avalon Airshow 2013.** AAL provided a conference booth and conference facility at the airshow. The AHIA hosted the launch of the new Russian Ka-32A11BC helicopter, the first Russian helicopter on the CASA Register. The Russian Ambassador was presented with CASA's certification by the Director of Aviation Safety, John McCormick after Peter Crook welcomed the Ambassador of the Russian Federation – His Excellency Vladimir Morozov to the AHIA Symposium.

**Standards Australian – Review of aircraft noise.** On Tue 3 Sep '13, Peter represented the AHIA at the Aircraft and Helicopter Noise Committee (EV-011) of Standards Australia. Helicopters are constantly being identified as targets for environmentalists. Peter was well equipped with noise data



Peter Crook, first President of the AHIA, is congratulated by Ian Honnery, CEO, Aerospace Australia Limited, the Founding Corporate Patron of the Australian Helicopter Industry Association.



on almost every helicopter in Australia and other information from the US based Helicopter Association International.

**Helicopter Association International – Heli-Expo 2013.** Peter was able to participate in the world's largest helicopter conference and made contact with all the senior people of the HAI. As a result the AHIA is now an affiliate member of the International Federation of Helicopter Associations (IFHA). By way of explanation, in 1993 the European Helicopter Association (EHA) together with the Helicopter Association International (HAI) founded the IFHA which has an observer status at ICAO. Peter has invited Matt Zuccaro, President of HAI to be the keynote speaker at Rotortech 2104.

*“We are considered to have the sixth largest helicopter fleet in the world”*

**NZ Helicopter Association.** Peter was able to visit the Aviation Industry Association in NZ. He met with the the NZ Helicopter Association and gave a presentation on the AHIA. Peter was recently talking with the AIA about the CASR Part 61 MOS review and the Medical Transport and NVIS (meeting in Adelaide and mentioned the AHIA's attendance at the recent Chief Pilots' Meeting at Newcastle involving HEMS, Police, SAR and off-shore operators. NZ attendees for Rotortech 2014 can fly direct to the Sunshine Coast from NZ.

**CASA liaison officer for AHIA Board.** Our request to CASA's Director of Aviation

Safety (DAS), John McCormick, for closer contact was well received. The DAS offered their helicopter specialist Dale South as the best person for this role. Further updates are in this issue of 'Airwaves'.

**National Aerial Firefighting Centre Conference.** The AHIA was invited to the NSW pre fire season briefing at Rural Fire Services on 27 Aug '13. All aerial firefighting operators were represented. Keith McKay, RFS, had requested a meeting to discuss their problems with the new CASR Part 91. Helicopters fly around 17,000 hours on fires operations each year in NSW. Peter was able to attend as the AHIA's representative.

**Bell 412 performance standards – one engine.** Peter has asked the US based HAI about confusion currently existing in Australian about procedures for a Bell 412 helicopter operating to an elevated helipad. The problem has arisen as a result of an Australian auditor advising major operators the Bell 412 does not meet compliance requirements due to a different presentation of limitations in the aircraft flight manual.

**CASR Part 61 MOS review:** This has involved two teleconferences each week involving eight AHIA specialists. Team Leader is Mark Scrygmeour, VP of AHIA. Mark has spent an enormous amount of time gathering support from major operators who were not aware of the shortcomings of the new regulatory system. Recently Mark was asked by Senator David Fawcett prior to a meeting with CASA about progress with CASR Part 61. A separate report will be made to AHIA members as an update has been received as we go to print.

**Pacific 2013 Offshore Helicopter Symposium.** Held on Tue 8 October 2013, at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, Sydney. A very successful event with around 100 attendees. A report will be issued soon to AHIA members.

**Rotortech 2014.** We have significant orders for the 20+ standard booths. Dates 24/25 May 2014 at Twin Waters on Sunshine



Peter Howe, Head of Flying Operations, CHC Helicopter. Explained off-shore commercial developments to delegates at the Pacific 2013 Offshore Helicopters Symposium on 8 Oct '13.

Coast, Qld. This is the first significant stand alone trade show for the new AHIA. It reflects the determination of the executive and growing membership to provide a strong and capable representative service on behalf of the helicopter industry during a period of strong growth. After all, we are considered to have the sixth largest helicopter fleet in the world, with 2,100 helicopters!

**Medical Transport Operations and CASR Part 138 and NVIS Briefing.** Rob attended the meeting in Adelaide on 25-27 September 2013. This meeting was arranged to discuss the movement of medical transport flights into the new Air Transport regulations and also to discuss the updated policy being considered for aerial work in CASR Part 138 and the policy for movement of NVG/NVIS operations into the CASR's. The programme included Medical Transport operation into CASR Parts 119, 121, 133 & 135; CASR Part 138 proposed aerial work categorisation, definitions,

certification and operational requirements and an outline of the integration aspects of NVIS operations into the CASR's. Host was Standards Development & Quality Assurance Branch, Standards Division, CASA. Event was run by Chairperson Dale South, Section Head Rotorcraft Standards. An enormous amount of information was passed to industry and questions were handled very well by Dale and his team. But industry must be aware a lot of changes are on the horizon; many with unknown economic ramifications; one observer noted smaller operators must watch carefully – as they often do not have reserve funds to carry them through the next three years or so - as new rules become effective in their various forms. And anyone who can follow the CAO 48 upgrades and options without a lot of research will probably be related to Einstein. Responses to the NPRM indicated additional staff will be necessary at most rescue bases to provide a 24/7 capability.

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# AHIA Helicopters In Focus

## Where Do We Find All The Helicopters?

When the AHIA was launched on 8 November 2012 at Bankstown, NSW, the CASA Aircraft Register showed 1,920 helicopters and by 5 November 2013, indicated 2,067. (Up from 1,951 at 30 June 2013).

Trying to assess annual growth rates by monthly changes can be confusing and to achieve an accurate picture we need to go back five years to 30 June 2008 when the fleet was 1,484 and compare this with the 30 June 2013 figure of 1,951. This represents an average annual growth rate of around 6% or twice GDP. Overall a good result.

Long term prospects continue to be good, assuming the growth rate of 6% continues, the fleet should grow to 3,000 in less than seven years. From 1997 when the CASA register listed 650, the growth rate has been steady, despite the setbacks caused by the GFC and upsets in the beef export industry. One characteristic of our industry, often forgotten by the general public, is most activities occur in rural or remote energy and mining resource areas located in northern parts of Australia.

Today, there are 1,299 single engine piston, 542 single engine turbine and 226 multi-engine helicopters in Australia, a total of 2,067. At present helicopters make up 13.7% of the 15,124 aircraft on CASA Register. Unfortunately, we provide 25% of all accidents – which results from half our flying involving low level aerial work, coupled with the high accident rate of the private owners – a problem noted in both aeroplane helicopter operations.

The distribution of helicopters may be of interest to suppliers and budding pilots. Queensland leads with 752, New South



Navy Squirrel team at an Avalon Airshow. The civilian industry may see a few bargains when the 40 Kiowas and 13 Squirrels are made redundant by the ADF's HATS pilot training programme as announced by the past Minister of Defence Stephen Smith in May 2013.

Wales 423, Western Australia 332, Victoria 279, Northern Territory 182, South Australia 48, Tasmania 45 and the Australian Capital Territory only six.

It should be noted 80% of Army Aviation resources are located in Queensland, according to a recent study by the Queensland government. It is for this reason the major helicopter manufacturing, assembly and MRO are located in South East Queensland – the result of the past Beattie Government (State

Labor) which pushed hard to encourage aviation business activities in Queensland.

A major part of CASA's helicopter regulatory activities are also based near Brisbane Airport.

Another interesting media report states the three fastest growing areas of Australia are Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern

Territory. These three have 1,266 helicopters, or 61% of the helicopter registrations. Obviously, Canberra, Hobart and Adelaide are not the best places to find a job as they all total less than a hundred helicopters or 5% of the fleet.

Commercial companies are shown in CASA's list of 856 non-airline Air Operators' Certificate holders of which 248 are helicopter. This indicates 29% of AOCs are helicopter; and yet the rotary fleet is only 13.7% of the CASA aircraft register. This is caused by the industry's large number of smaller companies, usually located in more remote areas. The mustering industry utilises more than one third of the fleet. Private helicopter ownership makes up less than 15% of the helicopter register (by comparison aeroplanes are estimated at 45%).

As mentioned previously, most of the annual growth in the economy comes from the Northern Territory which recorded a growth rate of 14%, Queensland 9% and

Western Australia 8%; which is interesting when the GDP is doing well with a 2-3% annual increase. Naturally, this has caused some degree of optimism in the helicopter industry as these three have almost two thirds of the 2,067 rotorcraft in Australia. The oil, gas mining boom has slowed, but expected to move into high gear late in 2014. The northern regions will benefit as they have over half of the AOCs issues by CASA. For example, Queensland leads with 92, Northern Australia 30 and Western Australia 13.

What is happening on the job front? Over five years ATPL(H) have increased from 616 to 750 (22%); CPL(H) from 1507 to 1678 (11%); PPL(H) from 564 to 822 (46%) – the latter reflects the rapid growth of private helicopter owners, many conduct mustering operations on their properties or use them in business activities. It is not possible to obtain information from CASA on where pilots reside, due to privacy issues, but the increase in ATPL(H) licences proves the heavy end of town needs more highly qualified aircrew.

The AHIA and the industry are trying to understand why CASA has dropped the co-pilot instrument rating system which enabled new aircrew to obtain essential qualifications that cannot be provided easily by the training industry. A very expensive exercise when multi-engine machines cost \$2,500 to \$4,000 per hour – if you can find a qualified instructor?

**Have you done your IREX yet?**

*“Most activities occur in rural or remote energy and mining resource areas”*

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The Bell 429 is being offered by Raytheon Australia in their bid for the HATS contract. The company is providing three Bell 429 helicopters for the RAN's Retention and Motivation Initiative Program. The first was officially accepted into service at 723 Squadron in June 2012.

## Defence Force Helicopter Training – Slow Progress

Although recent orders for about a dozen offshore heavy helicopters is creating clarity for the future of oil and gas extraction operations, the transfer of Army and Navy helicopter aircrew training to the civilian industry has received little media exposure due to the long delays in the government setting timelines.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) project is titled "AIR 9000 PHASE 7 HELICOPTER AIRCREW TRAINING SYSTEM (HATS). The Request for Tender closed in April 2012 and a number of company groups joined forces to seek an opportunity to bid for the very complex project. In late May, the government announced the selection of three contenders for what is now called - the second phase of the HATS competition.

The Ministerial announcement stated teams led by Australian Aerospace (offering the EC135 helicopter), Boeing Defence Australia (also offering the EC135) and Raytheon Australia (offering the Bell 429) will now go forward to submit final proposals under AIR 9000 Phase 7 to meet the future rotary-wing training needs of the ADF. Not listed was AgustaWestland, which previously had teamed with CAE and BAE Systems.

It is anticipated Army and Navy students will commence training at Nowra, NSW

from mid-2016. The Naval Air Station, HMAS Albatross, 150km south of Sydney Airport will probably be the home of the new venture. The estimated cost is around AUD\$1 billion. The HATS programme will include light twin-engine helicopters, plus synthetic training devices. According to a statement from the then Minister for Defence Stephen Smith and Minister for Defence Materiel Dr Mike Kelly released on 30 May '13, the introduction of the AIR 9000 Phase 7 training system will see the retirement of 40 Kiowa helicopters operated by Army and 13 Squirrel helicopters operated by Navy.

"This new joint training system will overcome the broadening gap in training systems required for the advanced operational helicopters to be operated by the future ADF, including 22 Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopters, 47 MRH 90 Multi Role Helicopters, 24 Seahawk Romeo maritime combat helicopters and seven CH-47F Chinook medium-lift helicopters," the ministers stated.

The government is expected to select the successful HATS contractor by mid-2014.

Industry observers suggest 20 to 30 EC135 or Bell 429 helicopters will be needed; however, the recruitment of instructors has started many debates. Some suggest existing military instructors will move into civilian life, while others claim there will be a demand for senior instructors from the existing schools. At present few of the thirty Australian helicopter schools have multi-engine IFR capability and pickings here will be lean. Concerns are now being raised about the suggestion existing SAR and HEMS check and training aircrew will be drawn to the HATS project. After all the Nowra district is a scenic coastal area with easy access to Sydney by road.

## What Will 2014 Bring – A New NSW Aero-Medical Operation?

The recent announcements about a dozen new off-shore helicopters ordered to service projects to the NW of Australia, proposed passenger carrying rules and the restriction of some helicopter types from built up areas has many thinking about their commercial viability.

CASA, due to lack of qualified people, is not able to update the NVIS technology legislation without help from outsiders; in particular the AHIA, who are forming a working group to help the regulator with their enormous task of legislating new technology.

One major change in 2014 will be the introduction of the helicopter NSW Health Retrieval Network. The initial briefing was held on 8 November in Sydney. The tender is known as the "Helicopter Tender 2013". The NSW Ministry of Health announced the new network will have a Northern NSW and a Southern NSW Super Region to help meet the growing demand for aero-medical retrievals.

Of intense interest was the requirement for compliance with the performance-based specifications, for engine malfunctions during take-off and landing. In fact, the spokesperson said the upgraded standards will restrict the bidders to offer only two

types of helicopter – both regions must have the same types. Proposed timelines are: Mid December 2013 - Request for Tender Release; January 2014 - Briefing Opportunities for Tenderers; end March 2014 - Request for Tender closes; December 2014 - Contracts Signed.

Response from industry was quick. On 8 November 2013, Carly Cook from ABC News released a news item with a headline "Hunter rescue helicopter contract bid includes scrapping entire fleet". Carly reported the Hunter's Rescue Helicopter Service says its bid for a major government contract includes a promise to spend more than \$70 million on new choppers. The state government is about to invite tenders for the supply of aero-medical services to the super-bases of northern and southern New South Wales. The rescue service says the 10-year contracts are worth \$250 million.

A Hunter Rescue Helicopter Service spokesperson was reported as saying, "We'll be selling all of our aircraft because they won't be compliant. Our bid includes buying at least five twin-engine models specially fitted out for medical retrievals - machines that have a price tag of \$15 million each. "There's only a couple of aircraft in the world that will meet the specifications that they require, so we've been on that track for some time. So it's an orderly sale of the current asset and the orderly bringing in of the new asset.

Another industry observer suggested "Helicopter Tender 2013" will need around fifteen performance compliant machines to meet online, training and maintenance operations for both regions.


An interesting Christmas present to lucky bidders in December 2014.



At present there are 15 AW139 helicopters on the Australian Register. As a relative newcomer, it has settled into the SAR and HMT operations with few teething problems. It may be one of the contenders for the NSW Health Retrieval Network contract?



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