

A M R O B A

General Aviation Revitalisation Government Decisions - #1

The government's White Paper highlights that the *“general aviation industry has experienced intense competition for people's leisure time and financial resources over recent decades. Improvements in roads, modern cars and airline services have made small aeroplanes a less attractive option for short distance travel”*. Nowhere in the White Paper does it draw attention to government past decisions that negatively impacted on general aviation growth.

Government and industry has recognised that there is a **shortage of pilots and LAMEs** both domestically and internationally but they did not take into consideration that past decisions by governments over the last couple of decades influenced the current lack of pilots and LAMEs in all sectors of aviation.

We are all aware of the massive growth of government requirements for the aviation industry, most without proper cost/benefit analysis to the Australian community. Even the White Paper states that *“airports are critical components of the national economic infrastructure. They support trade and tourism and help to drive growth across the economy”*. Governments do not seem to support or understand that general aviation aviators also support regional Australia more than tourists.

To revitalise general aviation, government decisions that were or were not taken placed negative economic consequences on the viability of general aviation and should be repealed or replaced by an ICAO compliant system. The aim now must be to create a safe affordable general aviation system that will enable aircraft annual utilisation rate to double within the next decade or triple over the next decade.

Current general aviation aircraft usage rate¹ is below 30 hours/aircraft/annum whereas the United States² is approximately 100 hours/aircraft/annum.

¹ BTRE; ² FAA.

The low utilisation rate is a safety problem to the ageing aircraft fleet. The ageing aircraft fleet was brought about when major US small aircraft manufacturers stopped building aircraft until liability was limited by legislation in the United States. During this period of no manufacture, recreational designs and manufacture boomed. This has in turn resulted in an increase in aircraft design innovation and, in the United States, a reduction of the median age of flying aircraft, two factors closely associated with the reduction of aircraft failure. This trend will also reduce the aircraft median age in Australia as long as higher utilisation can also be achieved.

The expansion of the 'cheaper' non type certificated aircraft supporting 'recreational' aviation has highlighted the difference in 'costs' between these two sectors. Cost brought about by government decisions that have never been reviewed to see what economic cost/benefits impact on the community.

So what decisions should be reviewed? – **Pilot shortage must be the first priority.** Without more pilots we don't have an industry.

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Pilot Training.

Comparing the CASA & FAA websites reveals the difference – one is about licensed training establishments only whilst the other includes licensed establishments and individuals. In the United States more than 50% of pilots are trained by **non-certificated** (14 CFR part 61) flying schools, and independent flight instructors. i.e. **unlicensed aero clubs/flying schools and independent instructors.**

- **CASA** – *The first step in taking up flying, as a career or just for pleasure, is to undertake a Trial Instructional Flight, or TIF, at **a licensed flying club or training organisation.***
- **FAA** – *The major sources of flight training in the United States include FAA-approved pilot schools and training centres, **non-certificated (14 CFR part 61) flying schools, and independent flight instructors.***

With the FAR Part 61 system, the availability of flight instruction from independent flight instructors would provide a much broader training base than what is currently available. **Broaden the training choice and increase pilot numbers.**

How many CASA licensed general aviation training schools have closed over the last decade or so?

Advantages/disadvantages to general aviation of implementing the FAA independent flight instructors system:

1. Increasing the geographically flying training capability is crucial to attracting potential aviators' access to flight training. The exodus of flight instructors from regional airports two decades ago has been a major reason for the pilot shortage in Australia.
2. Independent flight instructors have the potential, based on United States figures, of adding a 100% increase to the pilot pool. Independents would complement the licensed training organisation sector.
3. Benefits of any substantial increase in pilot training capability addresses pilot shortages as well as major flow-on economic effect throughout Australia. More pilots, more flying, will not only benefit aviation services (maintenance/fuelling, etc) but local regional community economies.
4. Many potential pilots lose interest because local airports do not provide flight training. If the closest training establishment is some distance away, then the potential aviator will find another leisure pastime.
5. Licensed independent flight instructors are more likely to provide flight instruction at regional airports throughout Australia.
6. Many pilots trained by independent flight instructors in the past have gone onto successful careers in commercial aviation.
7. Aero clubs, instead of having to be licensed by CASA, would be able to employ a qualified flight instructor and add to benefits the club can provide. This would regenerate aero clubs – some may even reopen.
8. Independent flight instructors do not compete with licensed flight training facilities, they add to the potential success of licensed training facilities. Many pilots start with private pilot training by an independent flight instructor and then opt for a structured course provided by a licensed facility to gain access into the commercial industry.

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Until there is a government decision to implement the ICAO compliant pilot training system based on the FAA system then this industry will not be able to provide pilot numbers necessary to increase aircraft utilisation.

Most pilots in the U.S. undergo flight training as private individuals with a flight instructor, who may be employed by a flight school. Those who have decided on aviation as a career often begin with an undergraduate aviation-based education. Some pilots are trained in the armed forces, and are issued with civilian certificates based on their military record. Others are trained directly by airlines.

The pilot may choose to be trained under Part 61 or Part 141 of the FARs. Part 141 requires that a certified flight school provide an approved, structured course of training, which includes a specified number of hours of ground training (for example, 35 hours for Private Pilot in an airplane). Part 61 sets out a list of knowledge and experience requirements, and is more suitable for students who cannot commit to a structured plan, or for training from freelance instructors.

Is it too late to implement an independent flight instructor system? Are there enough flight instructors available? Can CASA implement the FAA's independent flight instructors system?

e.g. IndependentFlightInstructors.com is one place to find flight instructors in the US.

<http://www.independentflightinstructors.com/>

Summary: Government has indicated a priority to implement commercial aviation regulations for the airline and charter industry but pilot shortage is commercially affecting these sectors now.

AMROBA will be pushing the GA Associations meeting at the end of October to make this issue as Priority 1. We can see no reason why adoption of FAR Part 61 should not be adopted ASAP. The government should return to drafting regulations in the same manner as they did in the late 1990's when they made CASR Part 21.

EASA has not provided a stable alternative to the FAA independent flight instructor system having recently pulled back from their original proposal for a PPL instructor. European aviation is very different to the geographic scenario in Australia. Past adoption of other countries' aviation regulatory systems has proven to have had a negative impact on general aviation viability.

General aviation cannot stand back and let governments make decisions anymore. All industry participants must get behind their industry associations and support their efforts to have new decisions made that will enable a viable and safe general aviation industry to expand to its real potential. The economic benefits to local communities including increased employment must be impressed on government.

Proposal: Government must adopt an independent flight instructor system based on the FAA system as soon as possible. Independent flight instructors are a foundation stone required for the revitalisation of the general aviation segment.

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