

General Aviation is in CRISIS. BUT WHO CARED?

A few years ago, we asked the question “**Who Cares?**”

Now we know **Nobody Cares.**

Australia has become a perplexing country where politicians and public servants have become completely divorced from the communities they regulate. They are at ease with the demise of job creating businesses and industries as though we are inanimate objects whilst they enjoy the permanency of employment in the public service. Politicians produce so many laws and their departments/agencies produce so much red tape one has to think we have a government, and opposition, determined to close as many small businesses they can and **Nobody in Parliament or the Public Service Cared.**

Pre 1988, the general aviation transport system was alive and well. General aviation was so populated that it was seen by major and regional airlines, as the employment pool supporting the airlines – no pilot or maintenance engineer shortages. The decline since the creation of the Civil Aviation Act and Regulations, has been so severe that the major and regional airlines can no longer look at general aviation as the employment pool for the airlines. **But Nobody Cared.**

Post 1988, small airlines, small feeder airlines, charter operators, many working under exemptions and variations to suit their particular operation, closed as new requirements in the Civil Aviation Act and Regulations were applied without variation. The flight training business was heartlessly treated where single independent flying instructors were forced to adopt the one-size-fits-all approach of approved flight training organisations. The decline meant loss of jobs and training ability at rural aerodromes across Australia. **But Nobody Cared.**

The loss of these small airlines, small feeder airlines, charter operators and independent flight instructors meant a drastic drop in general aviation aircraft flying hours across Australia that affected jobs in the support industry like aircraft maintenance, design and many rural jobs providing services to general aviation at local aerodromes. **But Nobody Cared.**

***Who May Care Now:** Maybe Qantas/Jetstar, Virgin, Rex, Sharp, Airnorth, etc. may now realise that the loss of the large general aviation employment pool they once had is adding to their costs finding pilots and aircraft maintenance engineers.*

GA today relies mainly on commercial GA to support it and some of the commercial GA is seasonal. The rapid decline from 1988 to 1995 should have raised alarm bells within politicians and the public service as jobs disappeared. **But Nobody Cared.**

By mid 1995 it was well known the Civil Aviation Act and Regulations had implemented requirements that were unsustainable for many in GA and the theme has continued with just about every change since 1988. **But Nobody Cared.**

A M R O B A ⁱnc

CASA is quite at ease **not applying** provisions they create under the Civil Aviation Act and Regulations to the non VH registered recreational aviation sectors – that also affected the sustainability of the GA VH industry. This two levels of safety standards gives the impression that government is either captured by the recreational sectors and are willing to apply different standards to fly and operate similar type aircraft or they are applying a one size fits all to airline and the VH general aviation. Another reason for the decline and loss of jobs. **But Nobody Cared.**

Government's flawed devolvement policy from owning/operating aerodromes to privatisation and community ownership did not specify development of aviation businesses on the aerodrome, it was about aerodrome development. Small aviation businesses once proliferated rural aerodromes across this country, virtually no longer exist. Many small businesses and jobs have gone.

But Nobody Cared.

With less than half the number of AOCs operating as in 1993, the industry decline and calls for help to reverse the over regulation and red tape has seen no political support to even review why these businesses were failing, no media support or industrial support as the jobs disappeared. There has been a cruel indictment of political lack of interest.

But Nobody Cared.

When the CAA was created many senior managers left. This loss of management corporate history changed the legal drive to create a 'new' aviation approach, supposedly as a result of a Parliamentary Inquiry in the late 1980s, by new inexperienced regulators who created more regulations with no regard to the sustainability of the aviation sectors. The 1988 Civil Aviation Act is very dated.

But Nobody Cared.

Every Australian government through this period promulgated aviation regulatory development guidelines directing departments & agencies to revert to creating regulations as the last resort, but CAA/CASA prioritised the creation of regulations and red tape. The opposite happened and jobs disappeared.

But Nobody Cared.

Unlike the most advanced 'general aviation' country – the USA, Australia has developed a very complex set of rules and regulations for aviation safety. They are the product of a long running (and continuing) process of incremental adjustments stifling the industry. As more than half the jobs in GA disappeared, the regulator jobs increased by nearly 30%. Instead of following the USA lead to reduce numbers and devolve functions, they opt for added bureaucracy.

Each major regulatory change has affected the sustainability of various sectors of general aviation. 1988 changes affected private owners more than any other sectors, thus forcing many owners out of the VH aviation sector into either the less regulated recreational sector or out of aviation altogether.

But Nobody Cared.

- Certainly not the government or the CAA/Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) who have continued to create regulations and red tape ever since the CAA was formed.
- **The Act needs amending to include 'regulations that support the**

development and safety of aviation' as it is in other countries.

Private GA was a successful and healthy 'cottage' industry that complied with 'standards' mainly promulgated in ANOs and then CAOs. Regulators, pre CAA, knew that administrative costs had to be kept to a minimum so private aviation could survive. Post 1988, regulations more applicable to airline operations have been applied to GA and has crippled the 'cottage' sector with a loss of many businesses and jobs.

But Nobody Cared.

Consultation, meetings, discussions, committees, sub-committees, working groups, teams, assemblies, panels, etc., etc., only delay the final decisions instead of simply complying with international treaties by adoption of ICAO standards unless a difference is registered with ICAO. General aviation has been waiting since 1998 for government to adopt the USA general aviation system.

But Nobody Cares.

We asked previously who cares and got no response.

GA is still very active in the USA where minimal regulatory impositions are applied. Since the creation of the Civil Aviation Act and Regulations, the steady growth in aviation regulations and red tape changed and the decline in general aviation started. The number of personnel and organisations involved in engineering and maintenance is dependent on the number of operators and private pilots actively participating, especially in GA. Those sectors are diminishing. The Charter, Aerialwork Operators and Flying Schools also declined.

WHO REALLY CARES: Every individual in general aviation. Industry sector associations that have members in GA sectors are aware that GA can grow **IF** the FAA system is adapted correctly. The FARs are very compatible with NZ whose regulations align with other NAAs in the Pacific region. The NZ system is based on the FARs for the non-airline sectors without the FBO system.

Implementing an Australian variety of the USA Fixed Based Operators (FBO) using a whole of government legislative approach is feasible. The US FBO system is controlled by their Department of Transport through their airport funding model that does not exist here.

Refer FAA AC 150/5190-7, Minimum Standards for Commercial Aeronautical Activities (FBO).

Adopting a FBO system where some organisations would not need CASA approval, as long as they employ appropriate CASA licenced personnel, can be safely implemented if FAR Parts 43, 61 & 91 are adopted.

In 1994, the Morris Report listed the number of participants in aerial work, Charter and Flying Schools were significantly higher than the numbers in last year's CASA Annual Report. The 1994 list provided to the Morris Report per State & Total compared to 2015 numbers.

AMROBA inc

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	TOTAL 1994	TOTAL 2015
Aerial work	268	155	232	67	126	17	11	49	925	NA*
Charter	243	150	237	69	100	15	13	49	876	593
Flying Schools	93	63	57	22	22	7	6	7	277	188
TOTAL	604	368	526	158	248	39	30	105	2078	781+AW

* Asked CASA for aerial work figures but no reply – guess 150-200 by some participants?

Since 2015 there has been a further decline in general aviation as confirmed by government’s own report promulgated by BITRE.

1. Twenty eight years of regulatory and administrative changes that have not been based on “sustainability” – this is what raises the ire of participants.
2. Regulatory reform based on “safety” without including “sustainability” has one outcome for GA – reduction in participants.

The Second Report of the Air Safety Regulation Review Task Force also identified similar issues in 1990.

Note: The Searle Report in 2008 identified the same issues raised in the ASRRTF.

The ASRR Report also identified similar issues raised by General Aviation since the mid 1980s and they still take no action.

The USA FBO specialised aviation service operations includes aircraft flying clubs, flight training, aircraft airframe and powerplant repair/maintenance, aircraft charter, air taxi or air ambulance, aircraft sales, avionics, instrument or propeller services, or other specialized commercial flight support businesses.

An FBO is a State or Federal registered business that starts up without any CASA approvals but must comply with FAR Parts 43 or 61 and employ FAA approved personnel, e.g. LAMEs, Pilots, etc.

The Act and Regulations need to be urgently changed or we will see the demise of general aviation if it is not too late now.

The following are questions **we thought a government that cares** would take responsibility for. What a mistake.

Based on the US FBO system, independent CASA licence holders could work in an FBO not approved by CASA such as:

1. How many FBO flying training organisations would exist if CASA did not approve them?
 - a. Must be an Australian registered business – WHS etc. apply to businesses.
 - b. Can employ an independent flight instructor (same as FAR 61)
 - c. The same FBOs may employ a LAME to maintain their aircraft.
2. How many FBO maintenance organisations would exist if CASA did not approve them?
 - a. Must be an Australian registered business – WHS etc. apply to businesses.
 - b. Must employ a LAME or LAMEs to maintain aircraft.
 - c. Aircraft operating for passenger carrying AOCs excluded.
3. How many FBO aero clubs would there be if CASA did not approve them?
 - a. Can employ independent flight instructor for training.
 - b. Can employ a LAME for maintenance.
4. How many FBO aerial work operators would exist if CASA did not approve them?
 - a. Must be an Australian registered business – WHS etc. apply to businesses.
 - b. Aircraft must be certificated for the purpose.
 - c. Pilots must be rated to fly such aircraft.
 - d. May employ LAME to maintain their aircraft.
5. When could an independent flight instructor or LAME work outside an FBO or CASA approved operator/organisation?
 - a. Privately provide flight instruction.
 - b. Work directly for a private owner who provides the data, equipment, tooling, etc.
 - c. Work directly for a business aircraft owner who provides the data, equipment, tooling, etc.
 - d. All work on non-retractable aircraft?
 - i. Excluded from major repairs and modifications.
6. Canadian owner maintainer Certificate of Airworthiness should be adopted
 - a. Enables owners to maintain their own aircraft. No different from non VH today.
 - b. Majority use a LAME to maintain the engine so it retains certification basis.

FBOs would need to be Australian a registered business to meet WHS (occupational/safety) requirements they are in the USA system. Compliance with a new CASR Part 43 encapsulating FAR 43 & FAR 91 Subpart E, and FAR Part 61, independent flight instructor provisions would need to be adopted.

Industry sustainability?

NOBODY CARED