



ENGINEERING AND TRAINING FOR THE AUSTRALIAN AVIATION INDUSTRY

A Policy Paper from The Australian Aviation Associations' Forum (TAAAF)

Issue

Australia has international treaty obligations to ensure our suite of aviation regulations is compliant with regulations issued by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Australian Aircraft can only be maintained by suitably qualified and experienced Licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (LAMEs). LAMEs who are required to hold a national license issued by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). The current LAME training regulatory and funding framework is producing training where Australian-issued licenses are not fully compliant with the ICAO regulations and as a result are not recognised internationally. This situation has created major issues for the Australian aviation industry.

Background

In 2004/5 the then Minister gave a direction to CASA that, as far as possible, the Civil Aviation regulatory suite was to focus on enabling mutual recognition and international harmonisation. Around the same time COAG directed that training for jobs requiring licenses be conducted under the National VET system. Thus CASA transitioned its traditional role of assessing licensing from its internal resources to the Registered Training Organisations (RTO) sector under Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

In recent years in particular, the engineering training framework has all but collapsed in this country. In 2009 there were 779 apprentices, in 2013 the number was 398, and by next year it is estimated there will be fewer than 100.

In 2007 there were several aviation engineer training providers including 6 major facilities, and in 2017 there are only 4 approved to conduct training to a license standard, of which two are relatively small. This is due to a number of reasons but there are two significant issues. Firstly there is a lack of a transparent training pathway for students to enter the industry and identify and career pathway and secondly, the funding arrangements for RTOs across the various States are confused and diverse. Additionally, these RTO's are now required to have an additional CASA Approval, namely as a Maintenance Training Organisation (MTO).

The first issue is well in hand. CASA is working collaboratively with the industry, including the Australian Defence Force and a complete review of the training regulations is underway. CASA, under the new CEO, is to be congratulated on this fresh approach.

The second issue may not be so straight forward to resolve, particularly in the detail. Essentially, a single organisation is required, to fund and oversight the compliance of RTOs in order to deliver nationally consistent training that will meet the CASA standards found in the proposed regulations. These soon to be amended regulations need to be fully compliant with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) thereby ensuring the new LAME will be both trained to an appropriate level and their qualification will be recognised globally.

Recommendation

That the Federal government assume control over the funding and management of the training requirements specified by CASA in order to produce appropriately skilled engineers whose licenses include greater scope and are recognised internationally.

TAAAF

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