

Sunday, 23 February 2020

Electronic Submission

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission to the inquiry into

THE CURRENT STATE OF AUSTRALIA'S GENERAL AVIATION INDUSTRY

Dear Susan,

BACKGROUND:

I hold a Private Flight Crew Licence with a Single Engine Helicopter rating and a Gas Turbine Endorsement (GTE). I hold Post Graduate Degree in Management and Undergraduate Degrees in Safety and Risk Management.

My role for the past 15 years has been to manage safety in commercial aviation companies domestically and internationally. During this time, I have the opportunity to observe through how the regulations have changed over the years.

I am currently going through the very painful process of upgrading my licence to Commercial Helicopter Pilot.

The comments contained in this submission are my own and I do not claim to represent any organisation or its management of any past or present organisation.

COMMENT

My submission will address the areas below in line with the terms of reference;

1. Theory Examinations.
2. Aviation Medicals.
3. Flight Licences.
4. CASR Part 5 - Safety Management Systems Project

Theory Examinations

CASA has established itself contrary to other entities that develop standards to issue licences. Whilst CASA set the syllabus, they also set the theory examinations inclusive of all questions and rules regarding pass/fail.

There is a disparity in this regard between training organisations and this is where CASA is not current with industry. Many flight and theory schools are Registered Training Organisations accredited by Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and deliver the training consistent with the syllabus of a particular qualification. An example being Diploma of Aviation (Commercial Pilot Licence – Helicopter).

These schools are subject to audit, not by CASA, but by ASQA to ensure standards are upheld consistent with industry and society expectations.

CASA does not require any approval for any person to deliver the theory element of the syllabus as confirmed in correspondence from a CASA below;

From: @casa.gov.au
Sent: Wednesday, 23 May 2018 3:45 PM
Subject: RE: Ground school [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Hi,

To be a theory provider, under our current legislation, you don't have to be working with a CASR Part 141 or 142 organisation at all. You should have no problem using them, but do be cautious about who you select – I would encourage you to speak (if possible) to some of their current/former students to see what they thought of the theory provider. Often students will give a very different picture from the theory provider themselves.

This is a fundamental failure and a significant contributing factor as to the manner in which theory is examined. For a private licence (PPL), the student may undertake the examination at the flight school and not be subject to additional Invigilation fees charged by ASPEQ. For CPL each of the seven (7) examinations have Invigilation fees ranging from is \$90.90 to \$113.60 + CASA fee of \$65. For a student passing all exams (a rare percentile) the first time will cost \$1246.00. Information is that roughly 1300 students sit exams per year and applying a conservative estimate if all students undertook exams twice, CASAs potential revenue for 2019 exceeded \$3m in examination fees. How is this being put back into the aviation industry positively?

The examination questions in some cases are not relevant to the category or the rating/endorsement many new pilots would be exposed to. It is long held the helicopter examinations are simply fixed wing with a several 'helicopter related' substituted to give comfort to the student they are undertaking a helicopter examination.

The content of the theory syllabus is out of date.

Air Services are decommissioning some ground-based navigation aids and requiring Global Navigation Satellite System. CASA issued a regulatory form notice in 2013 [Performance based navigation: GNSS and ADS-B equipment mandates](#). Why does CASA insist of including this information in exams in 2020 when it has full knowledge of its own mandate? Again, not consistent with the real world of general aviation. Most aircraft are already fitted with GNSS.

CASA have set rules that all examinations, for the CPL subjects, must be completed within two (2) years. Additional rules exist that should an exam be failed more than three (3) times, a lockout period of three (3) months applies. In 2016 I passed four (4) of the seven (7) exams and two (2) failures, one which was locked out for the three (3) month period. In 2018 during email correspondence below, it was confirmed that my passes would expire but failures would remain;

From: @casa.gov.au>
Date: Sunday, 10 June 2018 at 6:26 pm
Subject: RE: CASR Part 61.225 (2) exemption application [SEC=UNOFFICIAL]

UNOFFICIAL

Hi,

Using the current rules, your pass in CHUF will change status to **Expired** on 19/07/2018 (assuming that you don't have **CPL(H) Theory Examination Credit** by that date) and your two year 'window' would then slide to commence with your next CPL pass, CADH on 15/09/2016. Similarly with the passage of more time, CADH will change status to **Expired** on 15/09/2018 and your 'window' would then slide to your remaining pass, CSYH on 21/09/2016. If come 21/09/2018 you still don't have your **CPL(H) Theory Examination Credit**, then your CPL(H) window would commence on the date of your next CPL subject you pass.

Failures are still counted, whether they occurred within your current window or at an earlier time. Each of your failures, regardless of which subject, are always going to be

counted when determining any re-training periods or requirements for that particular subject.

I trust this answers your questions.

Regards,

@casa.gov.au

Lockout periods are contrary to the principles of education and a practice not undertaken by any other vocational or tertiary institution. How is this fair and encourage or promote learning?

It is accepted that decisions made by CASA are “reviewable” through an internal appeals process and then through the Administrative Appeals Process. This is costly and may takes a significant time. For the internal review, CASA charge a fee. Where I intended to appeal several questions in an exam, which were not relevant to helicopter operations, I was advised the appeal would cost \$1,120.00 with no expectations of success leaving the AAT the next step.

In its current form, one person in charge of the exams is the judge, the jury and the sentencing authority.

The theory syllabus required and exams at both Private and Commercial level for both fixed and rotary wing are grossly out of date and there seems no interest by CASA to make any improvements when they are fully aware of the issues. I have spoken to the CASA CEO on two (2) occasions where he acknowledged ‘an issue’ with no discernible outcome.

How are the CASA examination officers required to demonstrate currency in the subjects they’re setting examinations for? I would suggest they haven’t been in the general aviation world for many years if at all.

The permitted materials for the examinations are also not conducive to learning. CASA restrict the number of tags that can be placed into textbooks, dividers and the what type of materials are allowed. For example, students may self-print the regulations but not the ERSA or AIP and must purchase from Air Services.

The costs of the theory element are rising with no common-sense reasoning. It is not surprising why people undertake their commercial licence in USA and return to just complete the two (2) conversion exams and a flight test.

Aviation Medicals.

CASA medical certificates cover a range of flight options from recreational to commercial. Whilst it is accepted that the tests must be robust, a Designated Aviation Medical Examiners (DAME) conducts the tests and reports findings for CASA to review and issue the certificate. I have held both a full class 1 (commercial) and Class 2 medical certificates. I currently hold a Class 2 Basic. When my class 1 was issued, CASA however saw fit to impose an audit requirement as they determined me to be ‘glucose intolerant’ contrary to my DAME assessment. Aviation Medicine Department of CASA advised they had the power to review and impose additional requirements. My DAME had several conversations with CASA however was unsuccessful in having this removed. When my Class 1 certificate expired, I was flying privately and continued with my class 2 not renewing class 1. For the class 2 renewal, my DAME completed the assessment and sent to CASA with no adverse issues identified. CASA advised that in order to retain my class 2, I needed to undertake a stress ECG, glucose, urine and blood test. This is again contrary to class 2 medicals as *CASA no longer reviews Class 2 medical applications unless a DAME elects to refer the application for review*¹. I am 50 years old and as far as my DAME was concerned, in good physical health. **My DAME didn’t request a review.**

Following several robust discussions, CASA stated I could either comply or surrender my certificate. As I was undertaking private flying, I opted for the class 2 basic which was completed by my GP and submitted after which my medical was issued immediately.

¹ [Class 2 medical certificate](#)

Flight Licences

Last year my flight licence was stolen. I contacted CASA and advised I would need to pay \$65 for a new paper licence and it would be mailed which took 2 months. Why can a medical certificate be issued electronically as a PDF, but licence cannot? Why are CASA still issuing paper licences and require a photo ID to be carried? Why do we need an ASIC, Flight licence and another form of photo ID?

CASR Part 5 - Safety Management Systems Project

The Part 5 Project SS 15/04 - Safety Management Systems (SMS) commenced in 2015 and has had no significant progress. The aim is to set out a consistent standard for SMS across the aviation industry. For aviation organisations required to have a SMS, this has been welcomed. Minimal, if any work, has been completed and I have personally requested updates as recent as 10th February 2020 with the advice that the project remains 'under review'. The Civil Aviation Authority in New Zealand and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) commenced their Part 5 projects at the same time and have significant progressed implementation for areas of aviation however CASA has made no progress.

Recommendations:

1. All flight/theory schools are required to become Registered Training Organisations under ASQA and deliver the syllabus consistent the relevant qualification.
2. PPL and CPL theory be examined by the flight school not by CASA.
3. The lock out period for exams be abolished.
4. CASAs power to overrule to require additional non-essential medical tests be removed.
5. The CASA part 5 project be advanced with defined timeframes set and delivered.