

Question on notice no. 202

Portfolio question number: SQ25-002502

2025-26 Supplementary Budget estimates

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,
Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
Portfolio**

Senator Jessica Collins: asked the Civil Aviation Safety Authority on 1 December 2025—

Senator COLLINS: [...] I actually have a snapshot of some very specific examples where pilots have died while doing these training checks. In 1995, two pilots died doing a take-off decision speed cut in Tamworth. In 2003, two pilots died doing a loss-of-control asymmetric practice in Bankstown. In 2010, two pilots died doing a simulated take-off decision speed cut in Darwin. In 2017, three pilots died doing a simulated engine failure after take-off in Renmark, in South Australia. In 2019, two pilots died doing a simulated engine failure after take-off in Mareeba, in Queensland. In 2025, just a few months ago, two pilots died doing a proficiency check, which is still under investigation. One was a very experienced training officer and another a commercial pilot. The total, of the ones that I've been able to find on open source, is 13 people that have died doing very risky manoeuvres as part of the training checks. My understanding is that now they have to do more of them across a lot of different types of aircraft. Would you accept, having the understanding of that—and also the understanding that pilots are dying practising failures that almost never kill any pilots in real life—that you're forcing repeated exposure to known fatal-risk manoeuvres, and that contradicts the requirements of reducing risk?

Ms Spence: What I would say is that I'd like to go through the information in a bit more detail than that. I totally understand. We lost one of our own CASA employees as one of those people that you mentioned in those numbers. It is something we take very seriously, and we have looked at it. I suppose, with everything, there is that need to make sure that people have had that proficiency checking, but I'm happy to go through the numbers that you've provided in a bit more detail and also explain why we're doing what we're doing. We will take that on notice.

[...]

Senator COLLINS: [...] On the first issue, I was wondering whether, as a follow up to that, you'll be getting back to us and if you will pause and review the process and training and so forth.

Ms Spence: We'll look at it quickly. I do take it very seriously.

Senator COLLINS: Will it be before Christmas?

Ms Spence: We'll try to do what we can. We'll certainly be talking about it, and if there are any changes I will make sure that we let this committee know.

Senator COLLINS: Thank you.

Answer —

Please see PDF attachment.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2025-2026

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 202

Departmental Question Number: SQ25-002502

Division/Agency Name: Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page 126-129 (01 December 2025)

Topic: CASA - Fatalities during training exercises

Jessica Collins asked:

Senator COLLINS: [...] I actually have a snapshot of some very specific examples where pilots have died while doing these training checks. In 1995, two pilots died doing a take-off decision speed cut in Tamworth. In 2003, two pilots died doing a loss-of-control asymmetric practice in Bankstown. In 2010, two pilots died doing a simulated take-off decision speed cut in Darwin. In 2017, three pilots died doing a simulated engine failure after take-off in Renmark, in South Australia. In 2019, two pilots died doing a simulated engine failure after take-off in Mareeba, in Queensland. In 2025, just a few months ago, two pilots died doing a proficiency check, which is still under investigation. One was a very experienced training officer and another a commercial pilot. The total, of the ones that I've been able to find on open source, is 13 people that have died doing very risky manoeuvres as part of the training checks. My understanding is that now they have to do more of them across a lot of different types of aircraft. Would you accept, having the understanding of that—and also the understanding that pilots are dying practising failures that almost never kill any pilots in real life—that you're forcing repeated exposure to known fatal-risk manoeuvres, and that contradicts the requirements of reducing risk?

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Senator COLLINS: Thank you.

Answer:

The requirement for 2 proficiency checks per year was in place since 1988 for operators conducting scheduled commercial air transport flights in multi-engine aircraft.

As noted in the response to Committee Question Number 77 (SQ25-002152) from the 2025-26 Supplementary Budget Estimates, the requirement for twice yearly proficiency checks was expanded to more operators through changes made to the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations in 2018, and for some operators the requirement was deferred to February 2025.

As a result, all pilots conducting commercial air transport passenger, cargo and medical flights in cloud or at night, and pilots conducting aerial work operations in aircraft of higher complexity, or operations of higher complexity, in cloud or at night now have this requirement.

Key reasons behind these new requirements include:

- accident rate analysis identified significant disparities between low-capacity charter and low-capacity Regular Public Transport (RPT) (now called scheduled commercial air transport operations), often conducted in the same aircraft types, with one key difference being the frequency of pilot competency checking
- there was a need for greater transparency in the aerial work sector regarding which aircraft and operations required a higher frequency of training and checking to control risk

Every regulator in the world requires pilots to train for engine failures. Standards are set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and Australian requirements are comparable with other jurisdictions.