



CIVIL AVIATION
SAFETY AUTHORITY
AUSTRALIA

[AAA 17 attachment]

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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22 April 2003

The Hon John Anderson MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Transport and Regional Services
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Your email of 3rd April expressed your concerns regarding CASA's involvement in the area of airspace reform.

CASA is totally committed at all levels to a safe and timely introduction of the National Airspace System. I am aware of the accusations of a conspiracy within the authority to undermine the process. There is nothing new about these accusations: various officers, including myself, have suffered them repeatedly over the years. I have never been able to find any evidence to support the allegations, other than officers sticking to their beliefs of what is correct and safe regardless of the pressure put on them by others with different motives.

We were, additionally, our own worst enemy in the breakdown of process over the educational material for Stage 1A of NAS. I have agreed with Mike Smith that he should take the leading role in producing the educational and promotional material in the future. This is Mike's forte and I am sure he will do an excellent job while removing the potential for another period of tension such as the one we have just experienced.

You emphasised strongly that airspace reform is your top priority. Minister, this is totally understood. The letter from Jim Shirley to Mike Smith, which was quoted in part in a letter to you from one member of the ARG on 1st April, aimed to make two points. The first was that the CASA people responsible for working on the NAS are also working on the certification of Airservices, an absolute must by 1st May, and on the amendments to the Air Traffic suite of legislation agreed by you as a result of the threatened disallowance by the Labour Party. I am pleased to report that this was completed last week. The second was to put this in the context of weak project management from AIG as recognised by the ARG. This has resulted in the AIRG submitting documents that are being changed frequently thereafter and desiring deadlines far shorter than the norm for the magnitude of the task. We were pleading for adequate notice.

That said, I am uncomfortable with the thought that there have been stalling tactics by CASA. Despite the two critical programmes I have mentioned, we have not missed a NAS deadline and in no way have we delayed the programme.

I have had some difficulty understanding the nature of the complications caused by the CASA educational material. There appears to have been a misunderstanding of some technical issues. These were clarified by Mike Smith, Air Marshall Angus Houston and myself at the last meeting of the ARG. However, I also believe there is a clash between the need to market the new procedures, i.e. to promote their advantages and encourage pilots to use them, and the requirement to educate pilots on the definition of the system.

The educational material was a requirement of the Airservices Implementation Safety Case as a result of a low level of understanding of current Class E procedures identified by the AIG and Airservices during industry workshops. Without it, they could not have gone ahead with the introduction as planned.

Mike Smith has proposed a procedural way to resolve the issues. This was put to the last ARG, which decided it would take time to review and to implement and could be achieved by 1st July. I have no opinion as yet on the proposal, but clearly it does not meet the timeframe you sought for a resolution.

Instead, I am proposing that promotional material is produced underlining the potential advantages of the procedure recently introduced and possibly including the changes to be introduced in July. This will go out under the joint signatures of Bernie Smith and myself, and can be mailed to all who received the earlier mailing. This way, Bernie and I can underline our personal commitment to the changes. We will ensure that the material has the full support of Mike Smith before it is sent, and I am sure Bernie will also want to clear its content with his Chairman.

I make one more comment. You stated that in essence, we are only aligning our airspace arrangements with the world's biggest aviation nation, the U.S. In reality, nothing that is currently being done aligns with the U.S. model, and this is where all the difficulties arise. The procedure recently introduced does not mirror a U.S. procedure because the altitude boundaries of Class E airspace and the services provided in Class G are still completely different. This is the hybrid that I have talked about in the past. Only in Stage 3 do we come closer to a U.S. model of Class E and there appears to be no move to the end state that exists in the U.S. of almost blanket Class E. It is these differences from the pure U.S. model that make it harder to assess the safety issues.

I have set aside more of my time for personal direct involvement in CASA's role in airspace reform as you requested. You have my assurance, Minister, that I and all CASA staff will continue to work closely with the ARG (as a whole), the AIG and Airservices to deliver a safe and timely reform programme.

Yours sincerely

SIGNED

Mick Toller
Director of Aviation Safety