



## Airservices' CEO, Jason Harfield

CEO, Jason Harfield, has over 33 years' experience at Airservices, beginning as an apprentice air traffic controller at the age of 18. What he describes as 'many careers in one organisation', including head of safety and head of air traffic control, have given him an unrivalled organisational understanding, and were instrumental in leading to him being the 'first ever internally-appointed CEO'.

RAAA News talked to him about the impact of the pandemic on Airservices' operations, and the challenges new aviation technologies are bringing. 'During COVID, we had to continue doing what we do,' Harfield says, 'keeping Australian airspace safe and efficient for everyone who wants to use it'. The problem was that in the first year of COVID, with borders shutting, Airservices saw an 80 per cent drop in revenue. 'We are completely industry funded.'

While the major airlines weren't operating for much of this time, regional aviation was still active, Harfield says, so 'we had to keep operating, keep the towers going. Western Australia, for example, was operating at 80 per cent capacity, because of continuing fly-in, fly-out operations.'

Airservices had a three-part approach to managing the challenges of COVID: 'we had to react to the current situation, we had to be ready for recovery, and we had to reimagine industry – plan for the fact things were not going to be the same as before the pandemic'. The fact that Airservices received a portion of the government's domestic fee waiver scheme enabled the organisation 'to do these three things in a more considered way'.

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Jason Harfield talks to RAAA News about his air traffic management experience, and meeting the challenges of integrating new technologies into Australian airspace.

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### A tale of two airports: Cairns and North Kimberley

RAAA News throws the spotlight on two northern Australia member airports, Cairns in the east, and North Kimberley in the west.

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### New AMDA CEO

Justin Giddings recently became CEO of the AMDA Foundation.

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### Upset recovery training

A different perspective.

# From the chairman



**Malcolm Sharp**  
RAAA Chairman  
CEO, Sharp Airlines

We're working on behalf of members on a number of fronts.

In his 'From the CEO' column, Steve Campbell talks about some of our efforts to address the critical shortage of engineers, especially for regional operators. On the pilot situation, the board and I have been monitoring the actions of the Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP) in challenging the bonding arrangements in the award, following changes ratified by the Fair Work Commission in November 2019.

**The bonding agreement offers a way for young pilots who have been flying smaller aircraft but can't afford to pay for a type or class rating, to advance their careers.**

Under the bonding agreement, operators enter into a formal agreement with these young pilots, paying the cost of their training in return for service: two years' commitment, or three years for jet aircraft ratings. From my point of view – it's a win-win: pilots who are not from wealthy backgrounds can further their careers, regional operators have some security of workforce, and the industry as a whole benefit from having operators invest in their flight crew.

If for some reason, a young pilot wants to break a bonding agreement, and get out early, they can. They pay out the operator at the pre-agreed, pro-rata rate, which has already been discounted by 50 per cent of the actual cost following negotiations between the AFAP and the industry at the Fair Work Commission. Unfortunately, several operators are being challenged at the moment: the AFAP is attempting to find loopholes in the bonding agreement to allow some pilots to get out of their agreements without meeting their full obligations. That's a loss-loss situation for young pilots and operators alike and is not in the spirit of the agreement. AFAP will push operators back into a 'pay-for-training' situation which will disadvantage those very young pilots who need financial assistance to move up in the industry. We will be keeping a close eye on the actions of the AFAP, and keep you informed of the outcomes.

We're also working on an exciting initiative in conjunction with the Flight Safety Foundation and the resources industry. The board has approved in principle a new program for peer support in regional aviation. I'll have more details in the next newsletter, but essentially it will mean that the 2,000 or so employees in regional aviation (mainly pilots and engineers) will have access to wellbeing support in a scheme similar to the successful one operating in the Qantas network. One thing the pandemic has highlighted is that mental health stresses are a clear and present issue for aviation personnel, an issue we as an industry need to address. Participation in the program will be included in RAAA membership, thanks to some very generous sponsorship. More details next time, until then,

Stay safe, Mal

## 2022 Aviation events

### RAAA Events

#### Roadshows

**30 June–1 July**  
Darwin

(29 June – Darwin Sundowner welcome function)

**22–23 September**  
Cairns

**23–24 November**  
Perth

[www.raaa.com.au](http://www.raaa.com.au)

### Other aviation events

#### Safeskies 2022

Conference Canberra

20-22 September

[Safeskies 2022](#)

**Early-bird registrations close 15 July**

## 2023 Aviation events

Avalon International Airshow and  
Aerospace & Defence Exposition

28 February-5 March 2023

[Avalon Airshow](#)

# From the CEO



**Steve Campbell**  
RAAA CEO

Following the change of government, the RAAA is working with the incoming Minister, the Hon. Catherine King’s chief of staff and at a high level in the immigration portfolio to address the critical shortage of aircraft engineers, particularly for regional operators. Recruiting engineers in remote areas is tough because of competition from the airlines and mining operations. Everyone sees sexy headlines about pilot shortages, but the industry desperately needs engineers. As a short-term solution, we are trying to have aircraft engineers added to the immigration priority skills list, hence our work with the Minister for Immigration and the department.

The government is talking about a white paper for aviation, and while that may give industry greater certainty around the policy direction the government will take regarding aviation, we don’t have the luxury of waiting two to three years for its release – the aviation engineering situation is too dire.



Photo | Duncan Grant

Our recent roadshows have had a focus on moving aviation towards net zero emissions by 2050, and



Photo | Skytrans. Image supplied.

sustainable aviation technologies and fuels, for good reason. We believe regional aviation will be at the forefront of this, and that as an industry, we have to be planning for it, now. There is a lot of work going on in this area, and I would like to make special mention of RAAA members, Skytrans. Yesterday they announced their partnership with Australian company Stralis to develop and trial a hydrogen electric propulsion system for a Beech 1900D.

RAAA membership represents the broad spectrum of regional aviation, and pleasingly, continues to grow, with a steady stream of new members. That gives us a stronger collective voice in Canberra, and enables us to highlight the importance of regional aviation more effectively. Next year, we are looking forward to hosting a big regional aviation showcase at Avalon Airshow—a big thank you to AMDA for their continuing support.

Steve



## Airservices' CEO ...cont.

Airservices' previous response to economic challenges, such as the global financial crisis, was to halt air traffic control training.

However, during COVID the training pipeline remained open, Harfield says. 'We didn't want to see the controller shortages which resulted from that strategy in the past'. But there was accelerated retirement to manage costs. Operations were re-examined in the light of two imperatives. The first, Harfield says, is adopting a risk-based approach, 'to provide a service level commensurate to the risk of the operation', and the second is Airservices' requirement under the Act, to 'foster and promote civil aviation'.

Movement patterns changed during the pandemic, with an increase in regional operations. 'In December, 2020, for example, Ballina was Australia's busiest airport. What we do hasn't changed, but [COVID] meant the way we do it had to change.' For Ballina, for example, a 'regional' tower was no longer the option—it would also come at a hefty additional cost to the industry (around \$15 million), and take two to three years to put in, Harfield says. 'However, we can provide an approach service from Brisbane Centre for Ballina in a much shorter timeframe and using current infrastructure to manage the airspace', and the low-cost ADS-B now available and approved by CASA, is becoming more common and contributing to safety. It's a similar situation at Canberra, where Melbourne Centre manages the approach, and the tower manages the runway.



Photo | Jason Harfield. Supplied.

The growth in new aviation technologies such as uncrewed operations (drones) and emerging technologies such as advanced air mobility mean a re-imagining of industry for Airservices. 'This time the growth rate is not linear, but exponential', Harfield says. 'How do we manage Australian airspace from surface to 60,000 feet, to create a safe, integrated system? Integrating the many potential systems and their interaction: crewed aviation: fixed-wing and rotary, transport and recreational; drones of various capabilities from small delivery drones, to large high-altitude, long endurance systems; and advanced air mobility vehicles, such as e-VTOL aircraft; not to mention satellite launch aircraft, is a mammoth task.'

Airservices, Harfield says, has 'signed up with different suppliers to undertake prototyping for a flight information management system (FIMS). There is no one off-the-shelf solution, so we are undertaking an iterative process, making sure we are not locking ourselves in. We have to evolve the requirements.' The FIMS will integrate with the existing air traffic management system.

'Australia's National Emerging Aviation Technologies (NEAT) policy, sets a world-leading commonality involving Airservices, CASA, Defence and the Department. We have taken learnings from around the world, and we have another great advantage: our jurisdiction covers 11 per cent of the world's airspace.'



## A tale of two airports: Cairns and North Kimberley

They're on opposite sides of the country: one is an international airport, while the other services transport for the resources sector. They share service during World War 11 as RAAF bases, and both play a vital social role in connecting remote northern Australian communities.

The airports in question are: Cairns International Airport and North Kimberley Airport (formerly Mungallalu-Truscott Airbase).

RAAA News talked with Richard Barker, CEO of Cairns, and Heather Veal, general manager of North Kimberley Airport, about their challenges during the pandemic, and how their airports are faring now. Richard Barker, a Kiwi who was Auckland Airport's general manager, retail and

commercial, joined North Queensland Airports, which own and operate Cairns and Mackay Airports, as CEO in December 2020.



Photo | Richard Barker. Moodie Davitt Report

Barker says the local 'tourism sector has done it particularly tough; with no revenue, the tourism operators had no choice but to let skilled people go. We were lucky – we were able to keep people on, we had trained people, so it made the transition (to increased domestic operations) much easier.'

According to Barker, Cairns Airport is fortunate that the board and shareholders took this long-term view during the pandemic, and the airport has been able to help drive the recovery of the region by adding over half a million incremental new seats to the destination.

'We have new routes from Cairns to Canberra, Newcastle, Adelaide and Perth, so when the borders opened, we recovered quite quickly,' Barker says. 'For the month of April 2022, Cairns was back to where we were in April 2019, and Mackay was above the same month in 2019. We're tracking well domestically, but international recovery is very slow, with our big source markets, China and Japan, still closed.'

Barker says 'Cairns is not expecting a reasonable number of international visitors until at least March 2023', and identifies ongoing challenges as the general uncertainty around interest rates, coupled with shaky consumer confidence, not to mention global uncertainty, with the war in Ukraine and wider political tensions.

As in many other places, some GA activity thrived in Cairns during the pandemic, Barker says. Those supporting the mining industry and aviation training did well, with a local organisation training avionics engineers seeing its graduates 'immediately get snapped up'. The importance of GA, particularly in aircraft maintenance, and the opportunity for smaller regional airlines servicing remote communities were something which differentiated Cairns from Auckland Airport for Barker. 'Especially in the wet season, Cairns is a vital link to Cape York Peninsula and the Torres Strait – the north of Australia, transporting people and goods, and ensuring remote communities stay connected.'



Photo | North Kimberley Airport. Supplied.

That connectivity is an important part of North Kimberley Airport's role. Built in 1943 during WW11 as an air force base, the airport is in the remote North Kimberley region of Western Australia, about 520 km west-southwest of Darwin and 617 km northeast of Broome. Heather Veal manages North Kimberley Airport on behalf of the shareholders. According to Veal, the airport, which was registered as a commercial air base with CASA in 2005, is primarily a staging post for off-shore oil and gas industry operations in the Timor Sea, notably Jadestone Energy and Northern Endeavour (currently being decommissioned), as well as NorForce and Border Force. NorForce (North-West Mobile Force) is an Australian Army infantry regiment employed in surveillance and reconnaissance of the remote areas of northern Australia, and is, Veal says, 'a strong user of the base'.

North Kimberley Airport's traffic comprises about three to four fixed wing flights per week, and six to eight S92 helicopter flights, ferrying 18 workers at a time out to the fields in the Timor Sea. 'We're the only airbase which can serve the Timor Sea,' Veal explains.

During COVID, from April 2020 to February 2021, North Kimberley Airport had an agreement with Japanese resources company INPEX to act as a base for helicopter transfers of workers out to the gas fields. 'We put in a lot of infrastructure while INPEX was there – we added a new briefing room for INPEX, along with a briefing room and ablutions on the southern apron to cater for COVID-positive passenger transfers, plus added more accommodation rooms, so INPEX pulling out and returning to Broome had a massive impact.'

There are no roads to North Kimberley Airport, so supplies for the 25 staff on the airbase (including 14-15 staff from the helicopter operators) have to be shipped fortnightly by barge from Darwin.

When RAAA News met Veal virtually, she was in the process of finalising a name change for the airbase: at the end of May, 2022, it was rebranded as North Kimberley Airport. Undoubtedly, though, the name Truscott, honouring Australian ace fighter pilot, 'Bluey' Truscott, who died in an aircraft crash in 1943, will live on.



Photo | Justin Giddings. Supplied.

## New CEO for AMDA

Justin Giddings is no stranger to the work of AMDA; in his previous role as CEO of Avalon Airport, he was involved with the Avalon Airshow for 13 years. He is looking forward, as AMDA's new CEO, to building on the almost 50-year legacy of AMDA founder, Ian Honnery, and growing the 'great things the not-for-profit organisation does for industry'. The role came at a perfect time for the 'Geelong boy, born-and-bred', both personally and professionally. 'After 13 years it was time for someone else to take over the reins at the airport', Giddings says. He is looking forward to building AMDA's business, and on the work Ian Honnery did in promoting Defence.

Giddings began his working life at 18 as a cleaner at Avalon Airport, 'a great employer' he says, and one he is very loyal to. He gained an apprenticeship there, became an accredited LAME, and went on to complete a commerce degree and a masters in business administration as a mature student.

Since taking on the role in April 2022, Giddings has hit the ground running; three weeks after joining the Foundation: the most successful ever AMDA maritime

event, IndoPacific, was held, breaking both visitor and exhibitor records.

COVID has created many challenges, not the least of which is event cancellations or postponements. This has meant that instead of holding four major events over two years, AMDA's four major events have come together in twelve months: IndoPacific in May, Rotortech in June, Land Forces in October and the Avalon Airshow in February-March 2023.

Giddings says that for Avalon Airshow next year, 'advanced air mobility and space are going to be a big focus'. AMDA will be bringing military from around the world to Avalon, which he says is 'shaping up to be the best air show ever'.



Photo | Avalon Airshow. Image supplied.

Longer term, AMDA has plans to expand and to deliver services right across the country. 'We want to grow our activities in Western Australia and South Australia. Defence has a presence right around the country, and we should too,' he says, 'at the same time doing other things in the states we are already in, NSW, Queensland and Victoria. Defence is going through a very interesting time, with a focus on promoting its sovereign capability; but we also want to look at civil defence, an area which is ever-important—police and EMS.'

'It's in line with our mission of promoting and supporting industry and sovereign capability.'



Photo | Extra 300L. Image supplied.

## Upset recovery training

New RAAA members, UPRT directors Jeremy Miller and Shane Tobin, are upsetting the traditional view of pilot training for recovery after establishing UPRT about 18 months ago.

Passionate aviators, the pair both soloed at 16; Miller went on to become a highly-qualified aerobatic pilot, and has flown most aerobatic types in Australia. He is a CASA flight examiner, and is one of a handful of instructors approved to teach formation aerobatics, and of flight examiners approved to test instructors for aerobatic, spin, formation and formation aerobatic teaching endorsements.

Tobin took the airline path, and after being accepted into the Qantas cadet program, went on to fly and command the B767, and then the B787, on which he is currently a type rating instructor and check pilot. He has also served on ICAO instrument flight procedure working groups, and been a sim instructor for Air Force cadets and private industry. They apply their diverse but complementary experience to what they describe as 'opening people's eyes to how human factors skills interact with stick and rudder capability.'

Tobin and Miller argue that the traditional simulator-based approach to upset recovery training can install a false sense of security.

'The simulator fidelity is never going to be the same as an aircraft', Tobin says. 'There's no real threat in a simulator. When a pilot goes into the sim, they know they will be able finish the session in 15 minutes, step out, and go and have a cup of tea. Our training is designed to address not only general handling and aircraft recovery, but especially to build the pilot's resilience to deal with startle and surprise.'

Miller and Tobin say that current upset and recovery simulator training practises for something expected, but the errors arise when something unexpected happens.

'That's why we started with a clean sheet of paper 18 months ago, and talked to human factors specialists and psychologists around the world. There's nothing out there which fits the aviation mould, and deals with black swan events.'

'The biggest aspect not addressed in current upset recovery training is the human factors side of startle and surprise – what's happening in the brain,' Tobin says. 'Our training gives people the psychological tools; how to recognise the symptoms of startle, how to cope with it, and they go up and practise it.'

'Rolling an aircraft from being upside down to being upright is not really that hard, any pilot can do it.'

'That's the beauty of what we have built,' they say, 'training for how to cope with all sorts of unexpected situations', a blown tyre on take-off, birdstrike-induced engine failure, and so on.

So, how do you elicit this startle response in an aircraft rather than the simulator? Training in an Extra 300L, Miller says. The Extra has a roll rate of 360 degrees a second, can pull 8Gs, and its large flight envelope means you can elicit the startle response safely.

However, Miller says, in the Extra, 'we limit a pilot to the roll rates and G-limits for the aircraft they normally fly'.

UPRT currently offers two courses: Level 1, for day-VFR private and recreational pilots, runs for three days (with four flights). Level 2, for (low-altitude) IFR pilots, think King Air or SAAB 340s, runs for 4 1/2 days (with five flights). A third level course, looking at high-altitude performance and recovery is about 18-months away.

## CQU students quiz Airbus

Professor Doug Drury, head of aviation at Central Queensland University (CQU), visited Airbus HQ in Toulouse earlier in the year. CQU are RAAA members, and were profiled in the Summer 2021-22 issue of *RAAA News*. Drury met with a number of Airbus test pilots and safety personnel, who participated in a very informative online Q&A panel session for CQU aviation students. The panel included Captain Shaun Wildey, an experimental test pilot with Airbus; Tim Roach, head of safety promotion at Airbus; Nicholas Bardou, Airbus, flight safety director; and Professor Doug Drury.



Photo | New touchscreen cockpit display A350. Image Airbus

Australian students were able to pose questions online directly to the panel. The students had a particular interest in human factors issues for Airbus, especially relating to the interface with new technology, and evolving cockpit design.

## Welcome to new members

We are happy to welcome the following companies and individuals as members of the RAAA, and look forward to a long and productive association.

### Ordinary members

#### Inbound Aviation

*Tom Gollan, Managing Director*

*Inbound Aviation is a professional service provider committed to providing high quality flight training and charter services.*

<https://inboundaviation.com.au/>

#### Jetstream Air Services

*Kevin Pettitt, Chief Pilot/Director*

*Jetstream Air Services is a small boutique charter operator based in Darwin NT which commenced operating in 2015. The company operates a fleet of piston & turbine aircraft.*

<https://jetstreamairservices.com/>

#### CareFlight Ltd NT

*Philip Roberts, General Manager*

– Northern Operations

<https://careflight.org/>

*CareFlight commenced operations in the Northern Territory in 2007, providing an aeromedical jet service for evacuation of patients to interstate hospitals.*

*Since 2011, CareFlight has operated the Top End Medical Retrieval Service (TEMRS) for the Northern Territory Government. This integrated aero-medical operation utilises five Beechcraft B200 King Air turbo-prop aircraft, and an AW139 long-range medical rescue helicopter*

*CareFlight was appointed in July 2020 as the dedicated inter-hospital aeromedical evacuation jet provider (using a long-range Gulfstream G150) for the NTG for five years.*

### Affiliate members

#### Cairns Aviation Skills Centre

*Since its inception, CASC has graduated 755 apprentices (mixture of B1/B2), up-skilled over 7000 industry personnel, and also introduced the schools' Cert 11 program.*

<https://aviationaustralia.aero/about/campuses-facilities/cairns-campus/>

#### North Kimberley Airport (formerly Mungalalu Truscott Air Base)

*Heather Veal, General Manager (See the article in this edition [Winter 2022] of RAAA News)*

<https://nkairport.com.au/truscott>

### Want to feature in the next RAAA News?

Email us with your story idea: [administration@raaa.com.au](mailto:administration@raaa.com.au)