



Chartair celebrates 50 years

RAAA member, Chartair, which celebrated 50 years of operation in June 2024, owes its beginnings to three Northern Territory aviation pioneers: Brian Smith, John Tilley and Roger Leach.

Brian Smith ran the local Toyota dealership in Alice Springs in the 70s, and it was a natural fit for him to apply for a licence to sell single-engine Cessna aircraft to station owners. Chartair first took to the skies in 1974, when Brian Smith decided to expand his aircraft sales business to include offering charter flights. He operated the fledgling business until 1982, when he sold it to another NT aviation pioneer, John Tilley, owner of Till Air. Chartair operated in the southern part of the NT from its bases in Alice Springs and Uluru, and Till Air, which later became Airnorth, operated in the northern regions of the Territory (hence Airnorth's current airline designator code of TL).

Six years later, in 1988, John Tilley sold the operation to the third of the aviation pioneers behind the growth and success of Chartair, Roger Leach. A Canadian by birth, and an aircraft maintenance engineer by trade, Roger had established an aircraft maintenance business in Alice Springs, Leach Aero Services, recognising the need for engineering services to maintain the growing local fleet. Chartair's 50-year growth is a tribute to these three Territory aviation pioneers, who played such an important role in developing and growing the company from an aircraft charter operator to now offering scheduled passenger flights as part of the Remote Air Service Subsidy scheme.

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In those 50 years, Chartair grew from a small Northern Territory operation to a nationwide group.

From the chairman

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Engineer licensing update

RAAA News talks to Aviation Australia's Russell Quinn.

New members

The RAAA has several new ordinary and associate members. RAAA News talks to new associate members, Navigating Aviation.

From the chairman



Mal Sharp
RAAA Chairman
Sharp Aviation

There's been a lot happening recently for all of us committing aviation.

Longstanding RAAA member, Rex Airlines has gone into administration, and first and foremost, our thoughts are with our long serving board member, Jim Davis, and other Rex employees and their families as they face these uncertain times. Rex plays a critical role supporting regional and remote Australia and servicing these communities is at the very heart of our agenda. At the same time, while we don't want to lose Rex as a participant in regional aviation, it is important to remember that other RAAA members operate in competition with them, and that any government support must be targeted appropriately to ensure a level playing field.

After a highly successful convention, we've now resumed our regional roadshows. It was wonderful to catch up with many long-standing members in Darwin last week and to also meet some of our newest members and welcome them to the RAAA. As we did a few years ago, the board sat down together the day before the roadshow to work on our strategic direction for the next five years. We want to refocus on what we need to do to ensure we are supporting members in the best way possible.

Talking of policy and strategic direction, the government's Aviation White Paper has now been released. The RAAA participated in the consultation process, seeing the White Paper as a perfect opportunity to promote change and create a more resilient regional industry.

We worked our way through the paper in Darwin, but at this stage I fear it may have missed the mark. No doubt our CEO Rob Walker will have more to say.

Again, looking over the horizon, there's a bit of a groundswell across the industry to push for a review of flight standards. Recently I was at a two-day meeting in Caboolture to discuss concerns that pilot graduates are not at the standard they should be. The consensus across the industry, with reps from the RAAA, the AHIA and RAAus among others, was that this was noticeable across the board.

We're not pointing the finger at CASA. We believe there should be an industry-led solution to this critical problem, because the transition from GA to airlines is at an all-time high, and if we're not getting it right from the beginning, laying strong foundations, then there will be problems.

Finally, congratulations to Chartair on their 50th anniversary. We're in a tough industry, and to be around for that many years is a great milestone. I enjoyed having a drink or two with Mark, Matt and the Chartair team in Darwin to celebrate this achievement.

Hope to see you in the west for our December roadshow,

Until then, fly safe

Mal

2024 Aviation events

RAAA events

4-5 December 2024

Fremantle

(Plus board meeting and AGM)

CAPS peer training

Call for peer volunteers to undertake 2½-day training

12–14 November

Melbourne

For more information: please email

bars@flightsafety.org

Other events

Safeskies 2024

'Safety collaboration'
16–17 October 2024

Canberra

<https://conference2024.safeskiesaustralia.org/>

2025 Aviation events

Avalon Airshow

25–30 March 2025
Avalon Airport, Victoria

<https://www.airshow.com.au/airshow2025/TRADE/about/index.asp>

From the CEO



Rob Walker
RAAA CEO

My start with the Association was on a high, with the very successful convention providing the opportunity to meet so many members and industry representatives. That pace has been maintained, as our industry continues to face turmoil and challenges.

Following Rex going into voluntary administration, RAAA members are continuing to support regional, rural, and remote communities across Australia, providing vital transport and freight services. Our thoughts are with the dedicated staff and regional communities affected by the collapse, and the RAAA will be working with industry and the government to ensure a level playing field for regional aviation operators and the best possible outcome for all concerned.



Photo | Airnorth – photo comp finalist. Image: RAAA

We have also seen the long-awaited release of the government's aviation white paper. For regional aviation, much of the white paper is a consolidation of current activities and there are further opportunities for the government to support regional aviation more actively and address the challenges we face. We welcome the continuation of initiatives such as the Regional Aviation Access Programs, and funding support for regional airports to undertake critical safety and accessibility upgrades and will continue to engage with government for the betterment of regional Australia.

Last week many of us attended the first Series 3 Roadshow in Darwin. And what a great event it was. Warm weather and great conversations. A big thank you to all our valued sponsors for their support. Your support really does make a difference and is appreciated. It was great to visit the Royal Flying Doctors Services (RFDS) experience centre at Darwin Waterfront to kick things off, followed up with the full-day forum on Thursday. The program was fantastic. We heard updates from the aviation agencies as well as a range of great information sessions and Q&A.

I will be representing the Association at Safeskies 2024 (16–17 October), the biennial aviation safety conference held by Safeskies Australia. They are convening a mini safety summit to close the conference, where heads of all the aviation associations have been invited to outline the top three safety challenges their sector faces: hopefully to identify commonalities and possible mitigators.

Elsewhere in this issue of *RAAA News* we give an update on the new modular LAME licence, which has been implemented recently. Since the release of our report *Aircraft maintenance engineer shortage – crisis and opportunities* in October 2022, the discussion and activity have progressed. We're not there yet, but the RAAA can claim credit for keeping things moving, as the CEO of CASA, Pip Spence, acknowledged in the last Senate Estimates. There is more work to be done on some of the short-term solutions, such as recognition of overseas qualifications, and to address the longer term issues, but there is progress.

Thank you too to those who completed the member survey. Your feedback is vital in helping to shape our five-year strategic plan, which we worked on in a pre-Darwin roadshow board meeting. and will report on further in Western Australia at our final roadshow for the year. For a change of scene, and almost splitting the distance between Perth Airport and Jandakot, the roadshow, along with the AGM, will be held in Fremantle on 4–5 December. I hope to see to see you there.

Keep safe,
Rob

AVALON
2025
AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL AIRSHOW
AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE EXPOSITION
25–30 MARCH 2025

Chartair celebrates 50 years ... cont.

From those humble beginnings back in 1974, operating from a single base in Alice Springs, Chartair has grown to be a company employing a team of 70 people and operating a fleet of 40 aircraft from three bases: Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine.



Photo | Chartair 'ground crew'. Image: supplied

Mark Wardrop, owner and director of Chartair, says 'This means our customers can reach every corner of the Territory plus parts of Western Australia. Very few companies get to celebrate their 50th anniversary and this is something that everyone at Chartair is extremely proud of.

'We continue to invest in the company so that the people of the Northern Territory have access to modern, reliable and safe aircraft that provide vital connections particularly in the wet season when road access can sometimes be difficult' Mark Wardrop said.

In a vast, and often seasonally inhospitable region, Chartair has provided a safe and efficient way for isolated Territory communities not only to access vital health services but also provided critical freight services bringing all manner of supplies to these communities.

Chartair is closely associated with national aviation group, Aviation Logistics, and its subsidiaries Air

Link and AirMed. Aviation Logistics executive directors and Chartair owners, Mark Wardrop and Matthew Kline, said that the 50-year milestone has been possible due to the dedication of current and past employees and support from customers.



Photo | Chartair VH-ROS and pilot. Image supplied

Matthew Kline, Chartair owner and Executive Director of Aviation Logistics said the company is looking forward to the next 50 years. 'We are planning investment in new aircraft and are planning to roll out new hydrogen-electric powered vertical take-off aircraft (e-VTOL) in the coming years that we believe will be well suited to operating in the Northern Territory and will allow us to explore new markets while supporting our existing operations.'

Aviation Logistics is one of Australia's largest general aviation and regional airline groups offering scheduled passenger services, charter flights, freight and critical aeromedical flights via its three associated companies – Air Link, Airmed and Chartair. The group operates a fleet of 70 aircraft and employs a team of almost 300 professionals across seven bases in Melbourne (Essendon Airport), Sydney (Bankstown Airport), Dubbo, Brisbane (Archerfield Airport), Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin.

The group also operates four aircraft maintenance facilities providing both inhouse and customer aircraft maintenance programs.



Photo | Chartair group at Uluru National Park. Image: supplied

Chartair fast facts

- Chartair's very first pilot was a woman - Jan Styles – her maiden name. Today she is in her 70's and lives in rural NSW.
- In its early years, Chartair operated charter flights from Alice Springs and tourist joy flights around Ayers Rock, (now Uluru), flying a fleet of single-engine Cessnas (206/210), the twin-engine Piper Navajo, as well as the smaller Partenavia.
- In 1988 John Tilley sold Chartair to Roger Leach's Skyport Group which bought up a number of charter operations.
- Roger Leach subsequently sold Chartair in 2015.
- In July 2024 Chartair achieved Gold BARS registration. The Flight Safety Foundation established the BARS or Basic Aviation Risk Standard to provide a recognised standard for managing aviation risk to guide organisations chartering aircraft operators, in particular in the mining & resources sectors in remote and challenging environments.



Photo | Chartair flying over the inland. Image: Image supplied

Modular licensing update

RAAA members will know the work the Association has been doing with CASA and others to streamline pathways for licensing aircraft maintenance engineers as one way to alleviate the shortage of licensed engineers. Thanks to CASA's willingness to consider the proposals put in our October 2022 publication, *Aircraft maintenance engineer shortage – crisis and opportunities*, and acting upon some of them, apprentice engineers can now tailor their licensing pathway to meet their needs through the modular licence. According to Aviation Australia, 'This pathway allows students to acquire a Part 66 modular licence (with limitations) more quickly and expand their licence scope over time as they gain experience and pass the required exams. Employers benefit from the flexibility to tailor the licence scope of their employees to meet business needs.'

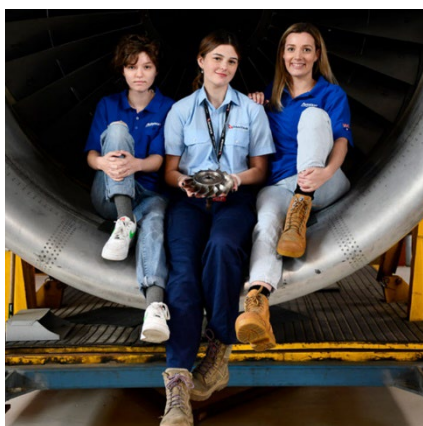


Photo | FAME (Female Aviation Maintenance Engineers) program participants Image: Aviation Australia

RAAA News spoke to Russell Quinn, Business Development Manager at Aviation Australia, which has implemented the new flexible modular licensing pathway. 'Before the new modular licensing system,' Russell says, 'getting a licence was an all or nothing situation.

We can now offer a licence which can be tailored to those wanting to work on smaller aircraft – it really comes into its own in the sub 5700kg category. It's a more tailored solution for the workplace.'

'If you want to work on R22s, for example, a small piston-engine helicopter, you can achieve a licence allowing you to work on engine and airframe systems and have exclusions against systems such as air-conditioning, electrical and instruments. If your situation changes later, you can remove the exclusions through a maintenance training organisation, allowing you to expand your licence scope.



Photo | Aviation maintenance engineers in the hangar. Image: Aviation Australia

Under the modular licence, after two years having completed all the theory and practice requirements for the airframe 'modular' licence you can apply for a licence that allows you to sign off airframe tasks. Another year, and you can qualify for the powerplant component, and exercise those relevant privileges, or vice versa. In this way, Russell explained, 'the modular licence pathway allows more flexibility to tailor the training journey in the workplace to meet both employee and business needs. This can lead to gaining a licence faster, with

exclusions against those systems that are not needed.'

There is also the opportunity for recognition of prior learning. 'There's quite a pool of people out there working as AMEs with Cert IV's who have Part 66 exams passed at 75 per cent. They can apply via recognition of prior learning to use the new modular licence pathway for a CASA licence. We've already issued a licence (powerplant) under the modular pathway to a helicopter AME based on what he had completed in his Cert IV in Aeroskills (Mechanical), the relevant Part 66 exams, plus the practical gaps.

Other changes to the engineer licensing regime are to exam requirements. The examination change means that candidates who fail an exam can now resit the exam after 30 days, rather than having to wait 90 days before resitting or do remedial training as before.

[Aviation Australia's landing page.](#)

Welcome to new members: Navigating Aviation

Angela Garvey is a highly experienced member of the aviation community, having run her own aviation business, as a dedicated commercial pilot, and as founder of her aviation industry counselling service, Navigating Aviation.

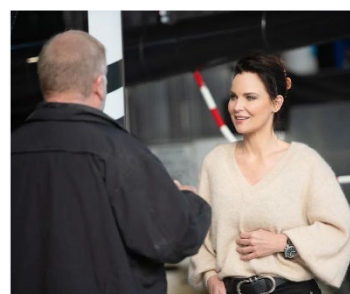


Photo | Angela Garvey. Image: supplied

Welcome to new members...cont.

Navigating Aviation

In her own words, Angela's 'flying training was very unconventional'. Taught to fly ab initio by aerobatic and ag, pilot, Mal Beard, she has a commercial pilot's licence, flew as a drop pilot in her own skydiving business, and gained her aerobatic rating. She recently demonstrated those aerobatic skills when she flew as a member of Australia's largest aerobatic display team, the 13-strong Freedom Formation, at the Pacific Air Show on the Gold Coast.

Angela founded Navigating Aviation, an organisation born of searing, hard-won personal experience, about 18 months ago, after three years of development. Seventeen years before, on 2 January 2006, a fatal accident at the skydiving business she and partner Brian operated claimed the lives of five people and injured two. 'Brian was injured and traumatised,' Angela says, 'he couldn't go near the hangar for over a year. Who helps you at this point? Absolutely no-one'. The pair battled to keep the business going, but flying became harder and harder, and eventually everything collapsed. 'I lost a decade of my life. We had undiagnosed PTSD, the business failed, our marriage failed', and in a downward spiral, she 'hit a really low spot in 2019.

That forced me to do something about it, so in 2020 I got back into flying and did my counselling diploma.'

In turn, that led to Navigating Aviation, providing an online counselling service for the GA sector of the industry.



Photo | Angela Garvey at the Pacific Air Show Image: supplied

'I knew it was needed,' Angela says. 'The airlines and bigger aviation companies have employee assistance programs and support networks, but there is nothing like that in GA. If we can encourage and support the wellbeing and mental health of GA pilots and aircraft engineers – who are the foundation of aviation – then we can reform industry from the ground up. My vision is to take the strain off the industry: to keep people in their jobs longer, to make them happier at work and ultimately, safer.'

One of the few benefits which came from the COVID pandemic was a greater acceptance of the usefulness of delivering services online, something which Navigating Aviation has adopted to enable the team to provide counselling support to aviation personnel in regional and remote locations. Angela's lived experience of aviation trauma and challenges is supplemented by her work with aviation-focused counsellors: psychology-major and aircraft engineer, Michael Goodhart, and Anna Douglass, counsellor and cabin manager. Consultant, Jo Douglas, who has a master's in mental health, brings broad experience of rural and regional realities from her work with the primary industry sector to the team.

Angela is also working with market research company, Bastion Insights, who are providing their services pro bono, to deliver a GA-industry-wide survey which will be rolled out in the coming month. The survey will Angela says, 'provide benchmark data so that we can work out what the key issues are facing GA'. While the survey questions will encompass the whole of GA, the data analysis will focus on four key areas: flight training, aircraft engineering, aircraft engineering training, and charter operations with low-hour pilots.

It will be distributed as widely as possible, though the RAAA and other industry associations such as the AAAAs, as well as through CASA channels and aviation media. She is calling on all RAAA members to complete the survey – after all, you can't manage what you don't know, and the more survey responses the greater the understanding, and hence the ability to address the key issues facing the industry.

Technical working groups update

Our next TWG webinar has been locked in – we'd love for you to join us for a closer look at:

Cyber Security

A sky-high view of the threats facing our industry right down to what you can do in your own business to prepare for, and mitigate the effects of, a security breach.

Wednesday 25 September 2024
12:30 – 14:00 (AEST)

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

Airspeed Aviation



Airspeed Aviation provides friendly, bespoke and cost-effective corporate, private and scenic air charter services, with a 24-hour operations desk, and dedicated Airspeed pilots.



Airspeed also offers full-time flying training schools with training centres in Scone (Hunter Valley), Tamworth, Gunnedah, Dubbo and the Shoalhaven. Airspeed attracts novices and advanced pilots from all over NSW and has trained hundreds of pilots since 1997.

Ben Wyndham
CEO and Head of Operations
ben@airspeedaviation.com.au
www.airspeedaviation.com.au

Associate members

Byron Aviation

For close to 60 years Byron Aviation has supported the international, domestic and military aviation industries specialising in the design, manufacture, maintenance and

restoration of aircraft furnishings, composite structures, ground support equipment and cabin products.



Byron Aviation is one of the few companies in Australia with both CASA manufacturing and maintenance approvals, allowing them to offer the complete solution for your aircraft cabin and ground support equipment. The company is based in Wetherill Park, NSW.

Pravin Singh
Executive Manager
sales@byronaviation.com
www.byronaviation.com

Associate members

Silk Wings Aviation



Silk Wings Aviation has decades of experience in the Asia Pacific, Middle East, Africa, and European regions.



SILK WINGS AVIATION

Whether you're an investor entering the aviation sector or looking to optimise existing assets, Silk Wings specialises in tailoring cutting-edge solutions to meet clients' unique requirements. Their extensive network connects with clients in search of aircraft, offering scheduled, on-demand, or ad hoc flying solutions. They are committed to ensuring maximum utilisation and delivering a

substantial return on investment while safeguarding valuable aviation assets.

They cover a diverse range of operations, including business, commercial, cargo, and rotary wing - from small turboprop island hoppers to luxurious business jets, to Airbus and Boeing widebody aircraft.

Simon Diggelman
Managing Director
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www.silkwingsaviation.com

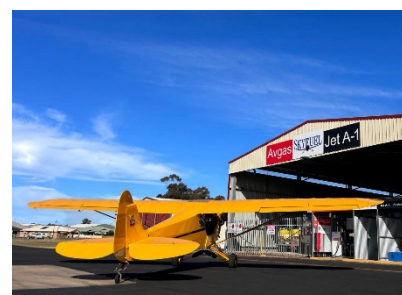
Skyfuel Australia Pty Ltd

Skyfuel Australia Pty Ltd is a national company owned by Viva Energy Australia. Skyfuel has operated as a specialist aviation fuel supply company for over 29 years, with an experienced and dedicated team boasting decades of collective expertise, Skyfuel stands as a trusted lead in aviation fuel solutions.



Specialising in refuelling services for helicopters and firebombers, Skyfuel works closely with the relevant emergency services agencies to support the bush-fire season.

Skyfuel also delivers bulk fuel to numerous airfields and helipads nationwide, with regular delivery runs for both Avgas and Jet A-1.



Welcome to new members

Jessica Spivak
Commercial Manager
jess@skyfuel.com.au
www.skyfuel.com.au

Navigating Aviation

Navigating Aviation's mission is to provide professional counselling, guidance and support to the aviation community, offering a safe space where members and their families can openly discuss workplace matters, mental health, incident management and more, without the fear of judgement.



Whether you're a pilot, small-business owner, aircraft engineer, family member, or supporting crew member, you will be exposed to the aviation industry's nuanced complexities – and its complex array of regulations, procedures, stress, and personalities, daily. Connect with Navigating Aviation to discuss industry-specific concerns such as flight test anxiety, confidence building and crisis support, along with an array of traditional counselling services such as relationship and family support, career guidance and work/life balance.

Angela Garvey

Founder
angela@navigatingaviation.com
www.navigatingaviation.com

Aviation QMS

Sheridan Austin, principal of Aviation QMS, has over 27 years of aviation experience, focusing on aircraft engineering, beginning as a hands-on AME and maintenance planner and then specialising in maintenance control and quality and safety.



Using this wide-ranging experience, Aviation QMS can help with your safety and quality management documentation, ensuring it is compliant with regulatory requirements, conduct audits, oversee the management of change process, and can assist organisations to gain CASA Part 145 and 42 approvals, and Flight Safety Foundation BARS accreditation.

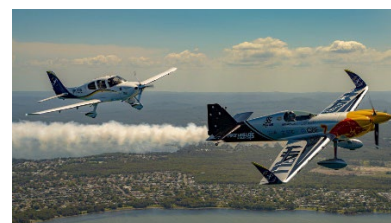


Sheridan Austin
Principal
sheridan.austin@aviationqms.com.au

Photo competition winners

We've featured the winner of the ordinary member category, Chartair, on our front page this issue of RAAA News, featuring a striking northern Australian sunset.

The winner of the associate member category was **OzRunways**, with their striking shot of the inimitable Matt Hall aircraft in action.



Moody skies, always a loved part of RAAA competition photos, also featured in finalist shots from Airnorth and **photographer Jarrod of Sharp Airlines** (below).



Want to feature in the next RAAA News?

Email us with your story idea: administration@raaa.com.au

THANK YOU TO OUR REGIONAL ROADSHOW SERIES 3 SPONSORS

