



## The Canberra roadshow

A record turnout of members attended the Canberra roadshow at the Hotel Kurrajong, and reception at Parliament House, on 13 and 14 September, the last one for series 2. We kicked off on the Wednesday afternoon with some great insights from our agency heads: Marisa Purvis-Smith (Department), Pip Spence (CASA) and Jason Harfield (Airservices).

Stephen Byron, General Manager of Canberra Airport outlined the work being done to promote 'Destination Canberra' in attracting more international airlines and making the airport terminal an award-winning gateway for the nation's capital. There was an also ever-so-slight hint of frustration with Qantas and flight cancellations; needless to say, Stephen won't be attending Alan Joyce's farewell!

Marisa Purvis-Smith is the Deputy Secretary Transport Group in the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, which must be a serious contender for the longest agency title! Purvis-Smith spoke to members about the white paper process, following the release of the Aviation [Green Paper](#) the previous week. She said 'the government is calling on all industry stakeholders for feedback. It's important to have your say, and help to inform the White Paper, which will set the aviation policy direction for the next 25 years'. RAAA CEO, Steve Campbell, reiterated that. 'I'm hoping that through our strong membership base, I can hear from many of you about areas that affect you. You are at the coal face, so I need your feedback on any of your burning issues', he said. Submissions close on 30 November but we need your thoughts by the end of October, please.

Continued Page 4

## In this issue

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### The Canberra roadshow

RAAA News reports on the RAAA's most recent roadshow, held in Canberra on 13-14 September.

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### Aviation Reimagined

The fourth in Griffith University's webinar series runs every week in October.

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### Two new RAAA honorary life members

Tony Mathews and Roger Leach awarded life memberships.

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### CAPS program update

Tony Merritt and David Anderson give an update on the progress of the CAPS program.

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### Short final

# From the board



**Neville Evans**  
RAAA Board director  
Jet Aviation

I am delighted to have the opportunity to reach out to RAAA members through this 'guest spot' in *RAAA News*.

I have had 45 years' aviation experience and 35 years with Hawker Pacific Aviation, and now Jet Aviation, which acquired Hawker Pacific in 2018. Hawker Pacific had been a member for many years, and I became involved in the RAAA in 2007/ 2008. I attended the convention at Coolumb, and found it was a great place to meet up with industry partners, to network, and importantly, a relief valve in a high-pressure industry.

When I had the opportunity to join the board, one of my goals was to help in getting more engineers into the industry and help get the guys licensed. An ongoing issue for the industry has been getting the right qualified people; it's perhaps our biggest challenge. Although as an industry we were trying to attract new people into engineering and flying, I think we lost our way for some time – lost momentum – we weren't promoting the industry the way we needed to, getting out to schools to encourage the next generation to join this great industry.

We started the Cairns Aviation Skills Centre (CASC) 19 years ago to help train apprentices for the local Cairns companies and try to cover the skills shortage we had all those years ago. It's industry-driven and government supported (by the Queensland Government), and over 800 students have now gone through. We have just taken our 100<sup>th</sup> apprentice this year and could not have achieved this without CASC and Aviation Australia providing the training.

But there are still challenges with the complexity of legislation, both in licensing and continuing airworthiness. It is still challenging to get your engineer's licence, both locally trained and foreign LAME conversions. It is frustrating when a registration change to a different national aviation authority (NAA) can prevent a qualified engineer being able to certify.

Meeting these challenges, the RAAA has proven its resilience and has shown its strong support of regional aviation. These are exciting times for the Association. I'm looking forward to the convention happening early next year, the roadshows have given exposure to different partners in the regions, and membership is at an all-time high. This makes us a more effective advocate on your behalf, everyone gets a voice, and we can help fix problems.

I look forward to catching up with as many of you as possible on the Gold Coast in March,

Until then,

Neville

## 2023 Aviation events

### RAAA Events

#### Annual General Meeting

Online event  
30 November

#### Sydney Harbour cruise 30 November

### Other events

Australian Aviation Wildlife Hazard Group

Workshop - Gold Coast  
24-26 October 2023

<https://aawhg.org/events/2023-workshop/>

## 2024 Aviation events

### RAAA Events

RAAA Convention and

Trade Show  
19-21 March 2024

RACV Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast

<https://www.raaaconvention.com.au>

### Other events

Safeskies 2024

'Safety collaboration'  
16-17 October 2024

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

# From the CEO



**Steve Campbell**  
RAAA CEO

Well, we're almost at the end of another very busy year, only the AGM (online) and our Christmas function in Sydney to go! As you've read, our final roadshow for the year, held in Canberra last month, had a record attendance. It was a great opportunity for us to stay connected with the aviation decision makers, and we were very appreciative of the time they gave to attend and present. Given it was a parliamentary sitting week, the Minister was very generous with her time, and a highlight was her presentation to Roger and Tony.



**Photo** | Omni's Keiran Byrne (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) at the Parliament House function Image: RAAA

We'll have a break now from the roadshows to concentrate on the convention in March, but the successes of the roadshows—the lessons we have learned—will cross over into the convention. That includes having interesting and relevant presenters, reinforcing our 'Connect, Contribute and Collaborate' convention focus. We will also be making sessions as interactive as possible, so a group of presenters will have five minutes each to speak, and then join a panel with a group Q & A to allow delegates to quiz them, and expand the discussion. We're hoping to

make the convention the biggest civil aviation event in Australia and are looking forward to seeing you all there in March. And, even more so than before, the golf day will be a great networking opportunity after the enforced isolation of COVID.

Don't forget; the early bird rate for delegates closes 31 October, [so register now!](#)



Even though we only have a few months left of 2023, there is still a lot going on. September saw the release of the green paper, along with a call for industry feedback to help guide next year's white paper. I am keen to hear your thoughts about the green paper, so don't miss this opportunity to have regional aviation's concerns heard, and get your comments to me by 30 October, please.

I also represent regional aviation on several consultative bodies, such as the Australian Aviation Wildlife Hazard Group (AAWHG) and Industry Skills Australia. I would highly recommend you consider attending the [AAWHG's upcoming workshop on 24-26 October](#) on the Gold Coast.

And to close: don't forget the AGM on 30 November. It will be an online meeting, with voting via Survey Monkey, so as many of you as possible can attend. There will also be an evening function that night in Sydney—a harbour cruise, where we should see out what has been a very busy and productive year for the Association in style. Until then,

Steve

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

## Canberra Roadshow ... cont.

The first afternoon closed with presentations from Jason Harfield, Airservices CEO and Pip Spence, CEO of CASA, who updated the audience on their latest news and priorities.

A highlight of the two days in Canberra was the opportunity to share drinks and canapes in one of the private dining rooms at Parliament House, generously supported by Omni. The **Minister for Transport, the Hon Catherine King** took time out from her hectic sitting-week schedule to address guests, and to present life memberships to two industry stalwarts, Tony Mathews and Roger Leach. (See separate article on Tony and Roger later in this edition of *RAAA News*.) Nationals' leader in the upper house, Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie also attended the meet and greet.



**Photo** | Hon. Catherine King addressing guests at the Parliament House function. Image: RAAA

Day 2 of the roadshow featured a great line-up of topical speakers, with Hamish Hansford, the Deputy Secretary of the Cyber and Infrastructure Security Group within the Department of Home Affairs, opening the morning's proceedings to talk all things airport and aviation security. One hundred and eighty-eight

successful cyber incidents were reported under the mandatory reporting requirements in the last year, he told the audience; 'successful cyber incidents which had a critical impact on industry'. He went on to say that 'the way in which airports operate make them lucrative targets for criminal (cyber) activities'.

Internationally, Hansford explained, the International Civil Aviation Organization was 'sitting down with the US Transportation Security Organisation to look at global security for aviation'. Closer to home, the Department is working with regional aviation to roll out body scanning, which Hansford said, 'has a higher detection rate of prohibited items'. The Department would be supporting regional organisations in the roll out, but, Hansford acknowledged, 'The economic impact has to have a trade-off for the aviation industry.' He relayed the good news that 'all ID-card issuing bodies would be rolled into one by June 2025', so there would be a single place where you could apply for ASICs and maritime security cards.

'We're in this together' was the theme of the presentation given by the CEO of the Australian Airports Association (AAA), James Goodwin. 'Collaboration doesn't happen by accident' Goodwin said and called for the various regional aviation sectors and the AAA to work together on their common challenges. The AAA represents 340 airports and aerodromes, and while 22 of those members are federally leased, Defence or mining airports, most are run by local government in fact, 200 of the 340.

'Regional airports are vital for tourism ... 45 per cent of tourist activity takes place in regional Australia, with 25 per cent of flights beginning at a regional airport', he said, but regional

airport infrastructure needs urgent attention. 'From 2017–22, the number of airports in "poor" condition increased from 5 to 13 per cent.'

He closed on a positive note, however, with the announcement of 'Prepare to take off', a web portal which promotes the range of careers the aviation sector has to offer and will be launched formally at the AAA conference in mid-November.

Angus Mitchell, chief commissioner of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau's update on safety trends closed a packed agenda.

It was a great way to finish off series 2 with one of the highest turnouts and incredible presentations from aviation leaders in the government. There will be a big pause on roadshows as we head into our convention in March 2024. Look out for the series 3 opener of the roadshows around August next year, and considering the timing, it will most likely be in one of our northern cities!

## Aviation Reimagined

For the fourth year in a row, Griffith University will hold its free annual webinar series, **Aviation Reimagined** every Thursday in October from 1500–1630 AEST.



**Photo** | Dr Emma Whittlesea of Griffith University. Image: supplied

## Aviation Reimagined ... cont.

The webinar series features industry leaders, policymakers and researchers from around the world, who share their insights about a transition to a low-carbon and climate-ready future for the aviation sector.

Each session provides insights from several subject matter experts, as well as providing a 20-minute Q&A session for attendees to submit their questions to the panel.

Learn more about transition to a low-carbon and climate-ready future for Australia's vital aviation sector with Griffith University's 'Aviation Reimagined' webinar series.

A team from Griffith University facilitates the series, including Dr Emma Whittlesea from Griffith's Climate Ready Initiative, with whom RAAA members will be familiar from past roadshows, Professor Tim Ryley from Griffith Aviation, and Professor Susanne Becken and Dr Bojana Spasojevic from Griffith's Institute for Tourism.

You can join one or all the sessions investigating the latest developments towards decarbonising flight. For more information, see the [program and speakers for each session](#), and [register for the free webinar series](#).

You can also [revisit the sessions from the past three series](#).

## New honorary life members

The RAAA recognised two champions of regional aviation at the Canberra roadshow: Tony Mathews FAICD and Roger Leach AM, making them honorary life members of the Association. The minister, the Hon Catherine King, presented the pair with their life memberships.

### Tony Mathews

'The Minister was very gracious with her time, and I was thrilled to be presented with the award by her,' Mathews said.



Photo | Tony Mathews. Image supplied

His aviation career spans over 45 years, with a consistently strong regional focus. He began flying training in Mildura in northwestern Victoria gaining his private licence at 17, his commercial licence at 19 (the minimum age) and becoming chief pilot and general manager for what was then the Mildura-based Murray Valley Airlines. That company would go on to become Qantas-owned regional subsidiary, Southern Australia Airlines. The operation grew, so by the mid-90s he relinquished the chief pilot role, to manage the growing team more effectively. 'We had 235 staff: 55 pilots, 75 flight

attendants and more than 20 engineering staff.'

With the collapse of Ansett, Qantas restructured, and the regional airlines were then managed centrally in Sydney. Facing the prospect of lengthy Sydney commuting, he decided against a move from Mildura to Sydney and thought he would take a break from aviation. However, the Royal Flying Doctor Service had other ideas, and convinced him to come back for three months as a consultant advising them on a planned restructure.

'We commenced the restructuring which was to take a lot longer than the three months.

'He became aviation manager,' so three months became 10 years.

Aviation board roles followed: he was deputy chairman of the Airservices Australia board for five years, a safety advisor to the board for a year; and served as chairman of the CASA board over the very challenging COVID years, from 2018-21.

Mathews says the challenges for regional aviation have remained constant, with recurrent skills shortages, both of pilots and engineers. 'We used to employ a new apprentice engineer every year, until it got to a stage where none of them left! We were very lucky – we would take about eight

## Tony Mathews ... cont.

or nine work experience students each year, our engineers would assess them and hand-pick the best.'

Considering the future of regional aviation, Mathews said 'regional aviation has still got to be part of our lives – we will find it difficult to survive without it servicing growing regional centres'.

## Roger Leach

Roger Leach was equally thrilled with his award. 'It's just wonderful to get recognition, that it was not all wasted'. This was said with a still discernible Canadian accent, even though he left his country of birth, Canada, in his early twenties, 'to do and experience things nobody gets to see'.

Along the way, he built thriving regional aviation businesses, firstly in Alice Springs, and then extending across the Northern Territory to regional Australia more broadly. His route to aviation success took in some unconventional waypoints, including stints in various Australian cities, in Papua New Guinea, Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest, the Bahamas and back to Australia again.



Photo | Roger Leach speaking after his award. Image RAAA.

Yellowknife, made famous by the reality TV show 'Ice Truckers', holds the title of the coldest city in Canada, with the lowest temperature recorded of -51.2 degrees Celsius (and a wind chill factor of -64). Leach says, 'You

could take a five-gallon pail of water and throw it in the air, and it would be frozen before it hit the ground'. The attraction for him, flying in Bristol Freighters as a loader/maintenance engineer up to 1000km north of Yellowknife across northern Canada?

'I wanted to be able to fix things when you didn't have things to fix them with.'

Understandably needing to go somewhere warm after the sub-arctic Northwest, he seized the opportunity to work on Twin Otters in the Bahamas. 'The Bahamas were a big transit point for drugs.' He had up-close-and-personal experience of the traffic in the two-and-a-half years he was there. 'I ran the night shift, and I came in one morning to see people handcuffed to the tie-downs of the aircraft with big duffel bags of drugs.'

Building on his initial tech studies in aviation, physics and metallurgy, he gained UK, Australian, Canadian and American aviation engineering licences, which stood him in good stead in establishing an aviation maintenance business in association with the Alice Springs Aero Club. 'I started to build up a maintenance business around the Territory. The Aero Club grew, and there was a vivid aviation scene at that time. I started importing aircraft for pastoralists, and for trucking companies, as it was about that time the camel mustering started.'



Photo | Roger Leach and a Central Australian Helicopters' (CAH) Hughes 300. Image supplied. Christine Davy, left, was Australia's first woman to hold a 1<sup>st</sup> class ATPL, and flew helicopters for CAH.

A charter licence followed, and then licensing for mustering helicopters, and the first of the 30-seat aircraft. The timing of the resources boom was fortuitous, as was the vacuum created by the demise of Ansett. Leach eventually decided to apply for an RPT air operator's certificate, not an easy exercise, but he eventually succeeded, and purchased half a dozen Metro 19-seat turbojets, and four Embraer-170 jets.



Photo | Roger Leach in the Airnorth hangar. Image supplied.

The restless energy that drove him to so many ventures around the globe finally led him away from aviation. He has sold his former aviation companies, with the exception of Darwin Aviation Services (which provides engines and spare parts for E-120s) and is looking to support an engineering precinct at Darwin Airport. He is also now focusing on his second interest, medicine, researching and conducting clinical trials on a range of proprietary medicines. These include one to treat an often-painful disease, Hidradenitis suppurativa, a severe form of chronic acne.

## CAPS off and running

The community of aviation peer support, or CAPS for short, is ready to launch. CAPS is driven by delivery partners, the Flight Safety Foundation and the RAAA, and supported by subject matter expert, clinical psychologist, Tony Merritt of Scentia Psychology,

who are workplace mental health specialists. Merritt worked with Virgin when they set up their program and has been involved with Qantas in their program for many years. He says CAPS is designed to support mental wellbeing for smaller aviation providers, and to provide an umbrella for a range of different aviation organisations.

The CAPS program is available to full-time and part-time employees, and full-time contractors of the registered organisation who serve in safety critical roles. This includes flight crew, cabin crew and maintenance engineers.

The scope for the first phase of the program will be flight crew, cabin crew and engineers, with the desire once it is up and running to extend to a wider group of employees.



Photo | David Anderson of the Flight Safety Foundation. Image supplied.

From a psychologist's point of view, Tony Merritt says the 'earlier you can pick up on a problem, the less intense the solution needs to be'. He says programs like CAPS help reduce the stigma that 'mental health is different and reinforce that struggling in life is normal'.

'Almost all the peer support is about everyday problems' he says, and having someone to talk to who knows your circumstances and your environment is

invaluable. 'Eighty to ninety per cent of peer support involves one or two chats'.



Only a very small percentage of people generally need to be escalated to professional support, which CAPS is funded to provide for if necessary.

CAPS is open to members of the RAAA and the Flight Safety Foundation's BARS program. Associations such as the Australian Business Aviation Association, the Aerial Application Association of Australia and the Australian Helicopter Industry Association will also be affiliated with the program.



Photo | Tony Merritt of Scentia Psychology. Image supplied.

The program is now calling for operators to register their interest in participating in CAPS, and for individual pilots, cabin crew or maintenance engineers to volunteer as peers.

Although participation is free, operators will have to register and sign up for the program because of insurance arrangements to provide legal protection for peers. David Anderson of the FSF, says CAPS is also calling for operators to assist the program by encouraging people in their organisations to become peers and supporting both their initial and recurrent training.

Training is free, and over the two and a half days, peers will learn about the basics of mental health, and importantly, spend most of the time learning how to start those conversations when you recognise that someone's having a hard time. Merritt also says there will be back-up for peers whenever they might feel they are out of their depth, with senior peers acting as coordinators. 'Inherent in the system will be that support for you.'

CAPS is now calling for up to 20 volunteers to undertake the first peer support training, which will take place from 13–15 November at Rydges, Sydney Airport.

Having that external support can help normalise and defuse a potentially problematic situation, Merritt says. He quotes the example of a pilot who had an incident while away at an isolated port. 'The peer support program contacted the pilot, who was feeling isolated and worried at the port. In conversations over the next couple of days, the pilot was able to get some external advice, understand their initial shock and work through their reactions.'

CAPS has a [dedicated website](#) where you can find helpful information about the program, other sources of support and frequently asked questions.

Throughout its development, CAPS has held regular update meetings with CASA’s principal medical officer, Dr Kate Manderson, who is very supportive of the initiative. CAPS has also visited the Qantas PAN (Pilot Assistance Network) program and is looking forward to the synergy between the two networks. Dr Manderson is also very positive about the useful alignment between CAPS and PAN.

## 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.

### Associate members

#### Blackbird Technology Services



**Andrew Barrett**  
Aviation Solutions Manager  
[andrew.barrett@blackbirdtech.com.au](mailto:andrew.barrett@blackbirdtech.com.au)



For over a decade, Blackbird Technology Services has been a leading supporter of the aviation industry, with expertise across diverse technology platforms,

*navigating intricate security compliances, and leveraging strategic partnerships with top technology providers and aviation specialists. Our solutions provide agnostic support for multi-vendor airport environments, allowing seamless integration and operational adaptability, while our single-point-of-contact service desk ensures a streamlined customer experience.*

#### AEG Fuels



**Stephen Leonard**  
Vice President of Global Supply  
[sleonard@aegfuels.com](mailto:sleonard@aegfuels.com)



Associated Energy Group, LLC (AEG Fuels) is a global aviation fuels and aviation services supply chain management company. Our core business is the marketing and financing of fuel supply and logistics solutions for the world’s largest airlines, militaries, and corporate operators.

## Short final

Congratulations to the following two winners in our 2023 Photo Competition. Their stunning images now feature on our homepage.



Ordinary Category Winner - Brooks Airways



Associate Category winner - Aviation Australia

These photos were clear winners in each category. With 249 votes cast, we obviously all share a thing for planes and sunsets!

Thank you to all our members for entering and voting. What is it they say? A picture’s worth a 1000 words? Stunning photos like these are a great asset to promote the importance of regional aviation, and the role it plays in regional communities.

So, make sure to get your entries in next year – and keep snapping!

<https://raaa.com.au/photo-competition>

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

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