



From The Lefthand Seat

Steve Padgett
RAAA Convention Chairman
Managing Director, Aeromil Pacific

I am delighted to take the Left Hand Seat to report on a successful 2015 RAAA National Convention.

The 2015 Regional Aviation Association of Australia National Convention was held at the Crowne Plaza, Hunter Valley, New South Wales, Wednesday 21 October to Friday 23 October 2015. "Sweet Sixteen" was a phrase quoted in an article recently published to describe the sixteenth year of the Convention, a phrase that resonated well with members throughout the event, reflecting the value of their experience.

The success of the 2015 National Convention speaks for itself - valuable operating funds were generated for the Association, a strong program of speakers and trade show exhibition set the platform for the industry to come together, complemented by the highly entertaining social activities.

Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley took on board our review and recommendations from 2014 and provided a first class venue backed up with a high standard of service.

The completion of the new Crowne Plaza Convention Centre added another level to the event this year, particularly with regard to the investment undertaken by our exhibitors. An excellent facility with a fresh open feel to the trade show from the moment you walked in.

There was a very positive mood permeating the event this year.

You could hear it and feel it, and you could not help being a part of the many conversations and business discussions from the Welcome Function Wednesday evening right through to the close on Friday night.

It is of note that the entire CASA Board attended the Conference with board members taking an active role in meeting and talking to RAAA members. It was also pleasing to see partners and families being involved with many staying on to enjoy the resort and surrounding Hunter Valley.

The quality and strength of the conference program this year was outstanding and a testament to the great background work by CEO, Paul Tyrrell and the organising committee.

Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss; Chair of Air Services Australia, Sir Angus Houston; and CASA Director of Aviation Safety, Mark Skidmore lead an impressive list of senior government and industry speakers.

The conference program was further strengthened by interactive workshops important to our members and the day to day operation of running a business, with focus this year on maintenance and engineering, education and training.

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The program also featured former Hawke-Keating Government Senator and renowned political commentator, Graham Richardson with his insights into the body politic past and present, and an RAAA favourite, Matt Hall, literally just off a plane following his incredible second place in the Red Bull Racing series.

The new Crowne Plaza Convention Centre showcased an extensive trade show exhibition run in conjunction with the conference program.

With the location of the Convention Centre now linked to the main building, members and delegates were able to move quickly and with ease between the conference program sessions and the trade show. The new larger layout of the central social area of the trade show pavilion proved to be a focal point for business and interaction throughout the two days.

There has been suggestion for this area to be used to host the Welcome Function next year; an idea along with other valuable feedback that I am sure will be followed up.

The Convention has built a reputation over many years for good business and great social activities and events.

We have always believed finding the right balance between the business aspects and social elements is an important part of the overall Convention experience. I am pleased to say the 2015 Convention continued this tradition.

Many enjoyed the Golf Challenge on Wednesday afternoon, a work in progress, with more to come for our golfers in 2016.

The Welcome Function cocktail party was hosted on the deck and outdoor area of the new Convention Centre

with the food and wine of the region setting the back drop for a night full of warm conversation.

Thursday night is something very special, with our convention guests experiencing an authentic "Oktoberfest" true to its heritage and spirit of celebration! A note of special thanks this year to Lufthansa Technik for hosting a truly wonderful evening.

The 2015 National Convention closed with a Gala Dinner held at the magnificent Hope Estate Winery. Guests enjoyed welcome drinks inside the historic "Great Cask Hall" followed by dinner and final night celebrations set amongst the barrels and wine production workings of the winery. The evening featured the awarding of the prestigious RAAA Scholarships, the speeches from these young recipients were a highlight of the evening and we can be confident our investment in the future of industry is in good hands.

The (so-called) expert Italian wine maker filled the room with laughter and the evening also marked the farewell to Paul Tyrrell, RAAA CEO for the past seven years, with a fitting presentation by Jim Davis, RAAA Chairman.

It goes without saying that the support of sponsors, exhibitors, delegates and our many supporters is gratefully acknowledged.

I would like to make particular note of the work undertaken this year by Rachel Washington and Heather McDowell from Mecca Concepts for the excellent job in working through the challenges presented in 2014 that the move to a new venue presented and delivering a high quality event for the Association in 2015. The positive feedback following the 2015 Convention is heartening and warmly received. It says a great deal about the quality of the people in our association.

We look forward to seeing you in 2016. ✦





IN THE COCKPIT



From The Righthand Seat

Paul Tyrrell
CEO

Recently I attended my final Convention, at least as the RAAA CEO. While there are naturally mixed feelings about leaving a job that you enjoy, the convention always restores my enthusiasm for our industry.

It is the members and exhibitors that make the convention such a unique event. It is still very hard to make a buck in Australian aviation but every year established and new companies turn up and display, with considerable passion, their new products and directions.

The undoubted highlight of the convention is the awarding of the six scholarships covering engineering and pilot training. I know for a fact that the unbridled enthusiasm of the recipients inspires many of the older industry participants to keep learning and to keep going. The scholarship sponsors, Jeppesen, Hawker Pacific, and Ansett Aviation Training are thanked sincerely for their ongoing commitment to the future of regional aviation.

Mike Higgins has been announced as the incoming CEO and I wish him every success in this rewarding and challenging role. Mike brings considerable industry and regulatory experience to the job. I am sure he will be out to meet you all as soon as he settles in.

Large regulatory challenges remain for the RAAA, with CAO 48.1 (duty times/fatigue) and CASR 61 (Pilot Licencing) with the former needing immediate withdrawal and well thought through exemptions implemented with respect to the latter.

The RAAA has formed a senior Part 61 working party under David Trevelyan's leadership that will now liaise directly with the newly formed CASA Part 61 Taskforce.

The CASA CEO, Mark Skidmore, has personally invited the RAAA group to take part in the Taskforce. Action speaks louder than words and it is urgently required in the above two areas.

On the positive side the new CASA Board and CEO were active participants at our convention and made themselves very accessible to the members.

This augurs well for the future given the fractured relationship over the past six years. It has been helped considerably by Jeff Boyd and Ian Smith having such a detailed understanding of regional aviation.

A large imperative is that the agreed recommendations of the Forsyth Review be implemented with alacrity.

CASA has been dragging its feet and the industry, possibly even the Minister, are becoming impatient.

The Forsyth Review is a very good flight plan for our regulatory future and needs to be actioned before anything else. This message must be repeated constantly by all industry participants.

In closing, I will state the obvious and say that the RAAA exists only for the benefit of its members.

If you have an issue, an idea or anything that will improve our industry, don't be shy; bring it to the CEO or a board member's attention and we will do our utmost to take it forward.

If you come across any aviation business that could benefit from RAAA membership don't hesitate to introduce them

It has been a great honour over the past seven and half years to serve as your CEO and I thank you for your effort, honesty and friendship.

Blue skies to you all. ✦



