

# Response to Green Paper on Aviation

Australian Flight Training Industry Association

## Introduction

The Australian Flight Training Industry Association (AFTIA) welcomes the opportunity to engage and provide insights regarding the Green Paper on Aviation. The paper is the initial step in creating an Aviation Training and Capacity-Building Roadmap as recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) for all member states. AFTIA recognises several pivotal challenges outlined in the paper, particularly concerning the pressing need for fleet replacement, sustainable funding models for flight training, and the retention of experienced flight instructors. The imminent requirement to modernise training fleets poses a significant financial burden on flight training organisations, warranting collaborative efforts and innovative solutions. Moreover, addressing funding models to ensure equitable access to aviation education while upholding quality standards is paramount for fostering a skilled and diverse pool of pilots. Simultaneously, the retention of experienced flight instructors is a critical concern, necessitating strategic initiatives to incentivise their continued involvement in aviation education. AFTIA is committed to actively contributing expertise and collaborating with stakeholders to navigate these challenges and promote a robust and sustainable aviation training landscape, with world-leading standards for proficiency and safety, and as a contribution to the recovery and future health of the Australian aviation ecosystem.

## Training Fleet Replacement & Simulator Use In Primary Flight Training

The high cost of replacing training aircraft presents a formidable challenge within the aviation education sector, significantly impacting students pursuing their pilot training. The expense of acquiring new aircraft or upgrading existing fleets poses a significant financial burden on flight schools, resulting in increased tuition fees, limited access to adequate training resources, and potential delays in student progression. For aspiring pilots, these soaring costs increase barriers to entry, limiting their ability to afford flight hours and comprehensive training. The scarcity of available aircraft for instruction can lead to longer wait times, heightened competition among students for flight hours, and therefore elongated training periods. Consequently, this financial strain and reduced accessibility to training opportunities could hinder the development of a new generation of skilled aviators, affecting both their learning experiences and their future prospects within the aviation industry.

Several potential solutions can help mitigate the high cost associated with replacing training aircraft. One approach involves embracing technological advancements in aviation by incorporating more cost-effective and sophisticated simulation systems into training curriculums. Better integrating modern flight simulators can substantially reduce the need for extensive in-aircraft training hours, thereby decreasing operational costs while maintaining high-quality instruction. Another viable solution entails fostering partnerships between flight schools, industry stakeholders, and government entities to secure funding or grants aimed specifically at aircraft replacement or fleet modernisation. Collaborative efforts can alleviate the financial burden on individual institutions, allowing for shared resources, bulk purchases, or subsidies that reduce the overall acquisition costs of new training aircraft. Additionally, exploring alternative financing models, such as leasing or innovative ownership structures, might offer more flexibility in managing upfront capital expenses associated with purchasing aircraft, thus providing relief to flight schools grappling with the financial strain of replacing their training fleets.

Updating Australian regulations to incorporate greater use of simulators in primary flight training represents a significant opportunity to revolutionise aviation education while addressing the above concerns. Integrating simulators more extensively into primary flight training can substantially increase throughput of trainees by offering a more flexible and efficient learning environment for aspiring pilots. These advanced simulation technologies, widely utilised in airline and other advanced flight training, provide a safe yet realistic platform for students to master fundamental skills, procedures, and emergency scenarios without relying solely on actual flight hours. By increasing the portion of training allowed in simulators, students can hone their skills in various weather conditions and challenging scenarios, reducing the overall time required for in-aircraft training. This approach not only optimises learning but also minimises the strain on airspace congestion, as fewer training flights are necessary. Additionally, the reduced reliance on actual flight hours can contribute to a decline in greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with efforts to promote a more environmentally sustainable aviation industry.

Furthermore, the updated regulations could mitigate risks associated with primary flight training by offering a controlled environment for students to practice critical manoeuvres and procedures. Simulators enable instructors to replicate scenarios that might be too risky or costly to simulate in actual aircraft, ensuring that students are well-prepared to handle diverse situations they might encounter during their aviation careers. The ability to simulate various emergency situations, adverse weather conditions, and complex airspace scenarios enhances students' preparedness while minimising the inherent risks associated with traditional in-aircraft training. Embracing these regulatory changes not only enhances the quality and safety of pilot training but

also fosters a more efficient, environmentally conscious, and resilient aviation ecosystem in Australia.

## Funding Models & Gates to Unlock

Encouraging funding models that support decentralised flight training across a sector predominantly or entirely dominated by universities fosters a diverse and dynamic aviation education landscape. While universities offer structured programs, decentralised flight training allows for greater flexibility and accessibility, catering to a wider range of aspiring pilots. This model encourages the involvement of independent flight schools, TAFE's, and specialised training centres, which often provide more tailored, cost-effective, and industry-focused programs. Additionally, decentralised training facilities are better positioned to adapt swiftly to industry demands, evolving technologies, and local needs, thus ensuring a more agile and responsive approach to pilot education. By diversifying the training ecosystem beyond universities, funding models can better allocate resources across various institutions, creating opportunities for innovation, enhancing accessibility to training especially in regional and remote communities, and ultimately cultivating a more inclusive and robust pipeline of skilled pilots to supply the Australian aviation industry.

Implementing a system that ties the allocation of flight training funding to specific gateways or milestones relating to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) licencing scheme can be an effective strategy in ensuring efficient progression and aptitude among aspiring pilots while managing resources judiciously. Requiring students to meet predetermined benchmarks at distinct stages of their training before unlocking additional funding encourages accountability and proficiency. These gateways could be linked to fundamental skill assessments, theoretical knowledge examinations, flight hour thresholds, or flight competency evaluations. Students who demonstrate competence and advancement would thereby unlock further financial support, while those struggling to meet the standards at a particular stage would prompt a re-evaluation or be redirected into training for other aviation industry needs. This approach not only ensures that aspiring pilots maintain a consistent level of competence but also safeguards against prolonged training periods for individuals who might face challenges progressing further, optimising resources for those who exhibit the required skills to succeed as commercial pilots.

For flight training students who do not progress to become commercial pilots, the industry must capture the knowledge acquired to fill other recognised gaps in the aviation ecosystem. Aviation is a small community and cannot afford to lose their skillset and passion to other industries. Aviation encompasses a spectrum of roles beyond piloting, such as aircraft maintenance technicians, aviation safety inspectors, air traffic controllers, drone operators, aviation educators, aviation managers, and airport operations personnel. These roles often require specialised knowledge and

expertise that flight training students acquire during their education. Transitioning into fields like aircraft maintenance allows individuals to apply their understanding of aircraft systems and maintenance procedures. Moreover, roles in aviation safety inspection or air traffic control capitalise on their comprehensive understanding of flight operations and safety protocols. Additionally, pursuing careers in aviation education or management leverages their acquired knowledge to train future pilots or oversee operational aspects of the aviation industry. Thus, while not all flight training students may progress into commercial piloting, the aviation industry offers a myriad of engaging career paths where their skills and training continue to be a valuable resource in the aviation ecosystem.

## Retaining Experienced Flight Instructors & Closing the Loop

Retaining experienced flight instructors poses a significant challenge within the aviation education sector, primarily due to the allure of career progression and higher salaries in the airline industry. Flight instructors, after accumulating substantial experience and expertise, often face tempting opportunities to transition to lucrative positions within airlines, where they can advance their careers as commercial pilots, and more easily repay the substantial debt incurred in training. The Australian airline industry's demand for pilots exacerbates this challenge, as airlines actively recruit qualified instructors, causing a continual turnover in the pool of experienced educators. Moreover, the compensation gap between the salaries of flight instructors and commercial pilots remains substantial, prompting many seasoned instructors to seek better financial incentives and career advancement prospects, thereby creating a persistent struggle for flight schools to retain their skilled instructors.

Addressing the compensation gap between flight instructors and airline pilots requires a multifaceted approach aimed at improving the financial incentives and career progression opportunities within the aviation education sector. One solution involves advocating for increased funding and support from governmental bodies or industry to enhance the remuneration packages for flight instructors. This could include subsidies, grants, or tax incentives specifically aimed at flight training organisations to allocate more competitive salaries to their instructors. Additionally, establishing career advancement pathways within flight instruction, such as mentorship programs, leadership roles, or opportunities to specialise in advanced training, can incentivise instructors to remain flight instructors for longer periods. Collaboration between flight schools, airlines, and regulatory bodies to create pathways that recognise an instructor's experience and contributions when transitioning to airline roles could also bridge the compensation gap. Finally, fostering industry partnerships to offer financial support for ongoing education, professional development, or additional certifications for instructors can contribute to their career growth, making the profession more financially attractive and ultimately a career opportunity rather than a stepping stone.

Granting experienced Flight Instructors greater authority to oversee and conduct advanced flight ratings akin to the CAR 5 regime, through accelerated CASA regulatory changes, can significantly benefit the aviation industry. Moreover, this approach fosters a mentorship dynamic, where experienced instructors can provide comprehensive guidance and real-world insights, preparing pilots for the complexities and challenges they'll encounter in their advanced aviation careers. Empowering these instructors with increased authority in advanced flight ratings aligns with industry needs, and promotes a more efficient, proficient, and safety-oriented aviation training landscape under CASA oversight.

AFTIA supports Project Boomerang, an initiative to return veteran commercial, military and airline instructors and examiners to cockpits and classrooms to leverage their immense experience. Bringing this valuable cohort of pilots back into primary and advanced flight training upon completing their operational flying is a strategic move that provides stability to Flight Training Organisations (FTO) and benefits both aspiring pilots and the aviation ecosystem as a whole. These seasoned aviators possess a wealth of practical knowledge, real-world experience, and a deep understanding of flight operations acquired throughout their careers. Their involvement in flight training programs as instructors or mentors would raise standards, offer invaluable insights into real-world industry requirements and provide mentorship to aspiring pilots. However, despite their potential contribution, CASA regulations currently create significant barriers that impede this transition. The stringent regulations and complex requirements make it exceedingly challenging and costly for experienced commercial, military, and airline pilots to seamlessly transition into general aviation training roles. By revisiting and potentially revising these regulations, allowing for a smoother transition, the aviation industry could harness the wealth of expertise that experienced pilots offer, thereby enhancing the quality and effectiveness of flight training programs in Australia.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Australian Flight Training Industry Association emphasises the significance of addressing several crucial elements outlined in the Green Paper on Aviation. The imperative need for training fleet replacement, sustainable funding mechanisms for flight training, and the retention of experienced flight instructors demands collective action and innovative strategies. AFTIA is committed to fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas among industry stakeholders, governmental bodies, and educational institutions to develop comprehensive solutions. We invite active participation and insights from all sectors of the aviation industry, government representatives, regulatory authorities, and educational partners to collectively navigate these challenges and pave the way for a resilient, progressive, and sustainable future for flight training in Australia. Together, we can forge a path that



ensures the vitality and excellence of our flight training landscape, benefiting the industry, aspiring pilots, and the broader aviation ecosystem alike.