

INDUSTRY SKILLS 360 SERIES – AVIATION WEBINAR

Webinar held: 15 March 2021

Panellists:

Steven Leahy, Chair, Aviation Industry Reference Committee

Greg Tyrell, Deputy Chair, Aviation Industry Reference Committee

Paschal Somers, Industry Skills Manager, AIS

Paul Walsh, CEO (facilitator), AIS

Q & A with the panel

1. When is CASA going to recognise / accept the Cert III and Cert IV RPAS standards?

Greg Tyrell: I'll have a go at that one Paul. Look the background here is the Certificate III in visual line of sight operations, RPAS and the remote pilot license that CASA currently license against are very similar and they have been historically very close. At the moment CASA doesn't recognize that for licensing purposes (the certificate III) which has been a frustration for us from the VET sector side, but also from an industry side. As we move into more complex operations there is a requirement for RePL holders to hold it. Currently they need to hold an IREX (instrument rating exam) and have passed that to be able to perform beyond visual line of sight. A few years ago, the IRC developed a certificate for RPAS for beyond visual line of sight. I was hopeful that we can get that recognized for beyond visual line of sight operations but also get the certificate III recognized alongside the RePL. There are discussions that I know the IRC have been having with CASA for a little while now and I know from an industry association perspective we too have also been having those discussions with CASA and we do hope to bridge that little hole in the not-too-distant future.

2. Part of satisfying the requirements of the Standards for RTOs 2015 is that a Training Package/product is relevant. Many UoC in AVI40119 Cert IV in Aviation (Air Crew Officer) and AVI30519 Cert III in Aviation (Rescue Crew Officer) demand that "in a Defence Context" is addressed in the knowledge and/or performance evidence criteria. How is "Defence context" relevant when 100% of students that come through our RTO are all from the civil aviation sector? Further, how are airline centric criteria relevant when all of our students are from within the rotary wing sector?

Paschal Somers: Kim it is quite a detailed question and in terms of that complexity, I think at the time I [had] just joined Australian Industry Standards and we were reviewing that at the time. I believe that when we are reviewing, based on the Technical Advisory Committee [work] and advice we get at the time, we try to ensure that all the stakeholders are recognized and consulted and that we place our materials for wider consultation. So, what I would ask then Kim is to maybe have a conversation with me offline. We want to

hear more details about that feedback. It is really important that we can log it and that we can bring it forward to the Aviation IRC. We can do some consultation and research but first I need to talk to you probably in more detail on this, maybe offline if that's okay Kim.

Steve Leahy: I'm going to take that a little bit further Paschal. I recall the discussions around the TAC committee at the time. Both the Cert III and Cert IV were fairly large TACs and Kim, Toll was represented on there from a civilian perspective, as was Westpac Newcastle, Westpac Sydney and a couple of other civilian operators. There was also a number of Defence personnel on there and I know Defence is represented on the Industry Reference Committee. Part of the challenge we have is that we're not in a position to create specific qualifications for civilian and then specific just for Defence, so sometimes you'll see that in a Defence context. There's a number of other units or a number of other in fact industries such as public safety, security that have that Defence context in there, but I think let's have a look at that particular issue and see if we can put it on our scope of work for you to review.

3. Updates to Digital Technology. Will additional units be added to the AVI Diploma in Air Traffic Control?

Paschal Somers: Happy to take that Paul. Melinda great to have that question from you and it was great to work with you on recent aviation projects. We will look at that for sure Melinda when we review the aviation diploma and air traffic control, so that will be part of that process. I think we would like to do some pre-project discussions about the possibility of new Units of Competency if that is relevant in that project development. Everything is on the table you know everything is a possibility. We will look at those in more detail and we look forward to some good discussions with you Melinda as we engage in that project together.

4. What are some of the most interesting technology developments that will change the way aviation works?

Greg Tyrell: Emerging aviation technologies are a fantastic area at the moment and it's not just the drone technology, it's everything related to that. We're seeing the emergence of electronic vertical take-off and landing systems, that may carry people one day. They'll probably be used for you know deliveries, emergency systems in hopefully the not too distant future before they carry people but certainly the digitization of our industry is really enabling the way we do things from the air traffic management side of it. In so far as that we all have an electronic signature, you know we can be seen or for safety purposes. But the way data works from these systems, effectively what we're seeing is, it's not so much about the drone, it really is about the data, and what is it that the drones are doing that creates value.

That's about data, so the digital systems that enable that and the types of applications that are emerging are just enormous. Every day I read about another dozen applications I've never thought of before, so you know we are really just starting to touch the surface of some of these emerging technologies. Safety and the regulations around the use of them will be the limiting factor initially. I think the technology capability will be sort of moving at pace but be slightly throttled back by the need for these to emerge safely and to be operated in existing airspace and above the existing population. The applications are endless for the emerging technologies.

Steve Leahy: Some of the other things we're seeing is the digital twinning in design, in terms of allowing engineers to work on some simulated stuff for maintenance design of aircraft. Again, flight simulators have just been getting better and better all the time and the replication we're seeing in biometrics being introduced to major airports, whether it's around security, baggage handling etc. The whole digitization of this industry is really going full pelt at the moment. I think one of the challenges for our IRC is actually keeping a pace with that because it's constantly changing. Some of the qualifications or Units of Competency and Skill Sets that we created four, five, six, years ago are already out of date.

5. Why would an industry person undertake the Cert IV RPAS beyond visual line of sight 12 months when you can do a 2-week course IREX?

Greg Tyrell: Thanks Wayne. It's a question that Wayne and I have spoken [about], and a number of people within industry talk about. There is a disconnect between industry being trained and moving towards a future endpoint and a rapid need for licensing. There is a big gap there at the moment and Wayne is 100% right. If I was in a commercial enterprise and I'm looking at what I need to go and do for a beyond visual line of sight drone mission, well I'm just looking at taking two weeks out of my time and do the IREX. The Certificate IV is a much larger investment of time, so from a commercial competition perspective, I'm looking at the IREX. From a relevance and personal development path, I'm looking at the Certificate IV. Industry are going to have to make that decision for themselves moving forward and I think hopefully we can get to a point where they do come closer together and that the requirements with CASA regulations are more aligned with the Certificate IV rather than a quick IREX which probably covers 30% of things that are relevant to a drone operator.

6. How can we ensure the AVI Training Package keeps in step with the Aviation regulations?

Steve Leahy: I'll take this and if Paschal wants to jump in please do so. Roger is very proactive and provides a lot of advice and support to the IRC during sessions and out of sessions. We use CASA and Air Services and other licensing and regulator regulating bodies as part of our projects to provide some oversight and guidance, particularly when we start creating Technical Advisory Committees. When we're looking at specifics, we always head hunt CASA to make sure we've got the right representatives on [the TAC] and then we specifically go to them when we put draft publications or draft documents out for a consultation. We purposely go to CASA and the other agencies with a specific request to review. That again is part of the challenge, how do we make sure you know they mould in nice and easy. As the other gents will tell you one of my personal goals is to have it made much easier to starting to kick some goals, but it is a real challenge as Greg just mentioned.

Paschal Somers: Thanks Paul and thanks Steve, you pretty much covered it. As Roger is online, he commented he's taking notes apparently, so that's really good feedback. The conversations have been really good recently, and ongoing in terms of making sure the regulations are in lockstep with the products we develop. We even try to ensure that the wording around regulations and compliance are worded in a way that they won't go out of date really quickly. We're trying to keep them as broad as we can but specific where they need to be, so again it starts in the project development. We make sure that we keep CASA informed and often CASA is represented on the TAC committee as Steve said. You're also across the regulations and so we will also rely on you to have a look at the draft materials

to make sure that we've got the wording right, so contact us straight away. I'm open as well to feedback and discussion about any of the areas to make sure that those regulations are consistent with the Training Package.

7. Will there be any specific things to assist pilots displaced from COVID-19 pandemic?

Steve Leahy: I think this is one of our really big challenges because we just don't know how long this pandemic is going for and then we're going to see whether the vaccine works and those sort of things. One of the discussions that I've been having numerous chats with Paschal is how do we identify bridging programs or create bridging programs and how do we make the RPL (or recognition of prior learning process) easier. We've only had this discussion in the last week or so, and one of the things that I often query is that people will often just go and do the course because it's much much easier than going to do an RPL process. I think that is a bigger challenge for us than looking at qualifications. How do we identify additional careers and roles? There's huge amounts of sympathy and I know that we've had discussions offline about how do we support the industry. Quite often, and Paul will back this up, we're regularly held accountable by the Department of Education as that's not our role as an IRC. Despite that we want to go out and save the world in this, we've got a very limited terms of references to what we can and can't do. I think that we could look at some sort of opportunity to provide that bridging program and RPL opportunities. I think that's one of the big things that we can do, and the discussion is - are we actually allowed to do that? Paul or Paschal perhaps you jump in here.

Paschal Somers: We've been looking at that as Steve said, in terms of quite a few existing products and Skill Sets that we've been developing over the years. This is quite drastic, isn't it, where pilots are grounded and where they're having to go into other areas of employment. Certainly, from my former colleagues in the Irish airline, noting many, many stories of pilots having to manoeuvre into other areas of professional activity just to just to keep going. It's the same is in Australia. It's an amazingly highly qualified group of people who have great skills, so it's about [whether they can] transition into other areas. There's plenty of options there, it's just about, as Steve said, the recognition process being made really efficient and having really experienced recognition prior learning assessors to help with the transition and recognising the skills they have currently and the many skills they have in the jobs they do in high pressure, high decision decision-making environments. And to be able to translate that into other roles across industry and to make that process easier for them. Of course, the industry themselves are trying all kinds of initiatives to transit staff and to keep them on board. My hope is, having come from the airline industry, is that we've been down before and this is a bit different we do our best to try and advise, to support, to take account of ideas. If you've got some suggestions and areas that we you feel that we can support or offer advice on, then we would be delighted.

8. RPL being harder and RTO doing it incorrectly.

Steve Leahy: Paul I can see Mark Costello's comment about RPL being harder and that the RTO is probably doing it wrong. Chances are that's exactly correct. But the widespread feedback we hear from students is that it RPL is a real burden, and a real problem. We continue to raise that, and we want to look at that. I don't think it's under the IRC remit, sadly, but it's something that we keep pushing upwards. How are we able to use the current skills and capabilities of the workforce and get them a qualification using their current skills, their current knowledge, their current capabilities, that's the challenge.

<p>9. Why would a student choose complete Diploma of Aviation instead of a Commercial Pilot license?</p>
<p>Steve Leahy: Yep! It's a good question Ian, I've got to say I think this is right across the workforce. It's not just in aviation we see that. I hear from colleagues in the search and rescue industry where they go and do internal training as a detective or as a search and rescue operative and why is it so hard to get a public safety qualification? We see this happening all the time, ultimately is that the licensing or the regulatory option is the key for you. I think part of our challenge is how do we marry that up and how do we bridge those gaps and we're not there yet. It's that collaboration with those regulators and it's not just with CASA. I know Roger's online, so I am going to commend him, but it's the Australian Maritime Safety Authority in terms of shipping. We've seen some challenges there and with some of those other regulators. It's a work in progress at this stage.</p>
<p>10. How do we attract new employees to the industry in years to come with flight hours etc?</p>
<p>Steve Leahy: Good question Kim and I don't necessarily think that's something that an IRC or any of us can fix on the basis that we rarely, and Paul or Paschal will correct me here I'm sure, but we don't put in time frames around a qualification. I just can't recall doing it. I think that operators will do that, and I've got us, and I'm sure in your case as well, it may be ambulances or those contracting parties that are requiring that. When I was with Westpac helicopters, contracts required aircrew, but it wasn't something that we set, or the industry said. It was the contracting party that would set you know 1500 flight hours for a pilot or 20, 30, 40, hours for an air crew or 50 winch wind cycles for an aircrew those sort of things. We certainly monitor those trends but it's not something that we actually put into any of our qualifications or units.</p>
<p>11. Has there been consultation between AIS and CASA? CASA developing guidance around this?</p>
<p>Steve Leahy: I can see Dave Mann from UAV has joined us, greetings to you Dave always good to see you. Wayne' making a comment of a quote from CASA that there's no consultation with AIS. To be blunt, I beg to differ. We've got a member, a CASA representative on the IRC and we head hunt representatives for TAC committees, I'm not quite sure where that's coming from?</p> <p>Paul Walsh: There's a second statement there about CASA developing guidance around remote piloted aircraft operators and setting up the consultation there, so I think we might take those as comments thanks. Thanks Wayne and certainly that'll be a conversation I'm sure that I'll get the IRC. Will follow up on.</p> <p>Greg Tyrell: I can shed a bit of light on that. Yes, certainly CASA do allow currently beyond visual line of sight operations in Australia. There's been a bit of a secret formula for a few senior companies to perform that in in the past and they're currently looking at streamlining that process with some standard scenario approvals that are a lot highly a bit more of a checklist and then what it's been in the past. Certainly, operator training and licensing does come into play there. But it is being streamlined at the moment which is a good thing, and what's currently existing in terms of licensing will apply certainly in the short term for those approvals.</p>

12. How do we keep the conversation of Aviation skills going after the webinar?

Paschal Somers: Keeping the conversation going, as I said at the beginning and as the IRC has also mentioned, this is the start of a conversation. It's going to keep going as we progress through our industry intelligence phase and gathering information. Your thoughts and ideas are important so keeping a conversation going is essential. As is completing the survey and offering your thoughts and ideas in that format. There's also an opportunity for you to contact me directly either on the phone or through email. I'm very happy to discuss the ideas, take note of them and collate that information for the Industry Reference Committee for discussion in forthcoming IRCs. Greg and Steve are fantastic and are always available out of session, on the phone to review thoughts and ideas that I've had or have come across and have been amazingly available. So, what we'd like to do is be able to say that the door is open, the phone line is open ready to take your calls, your discussions. We can also talk to you or your groups as we move forward, and I've been doing a little bit of that in the last number of years, so I hope to keep that going.

13. When is the survey out?

Paul Walsh: Just an answer there for Alana. The survey is already out. If you go to the engagement hub and look for the discussion starter, Alana, you will see the link to the survey, so thank you for the question. That's great.