

SAFESKIES 1995 – Presenter Don Kendall AM, FCIT

Worldwide, over one billion passengers travelled by air in 1994, and collectively the airlines were profitable for the first time since 1989. However, profits represented only 1.6 cents in the dollar, grossly insufficient to replace a large part of the fleet due to age and environmental concerns.

Jet aircraft accidents last year were statistically even with the year before, but the challenge before the industry is to reduce this rate of loss, or be faced with an unacceptable number of losses as the industry expands.

Risk factors identified as significant for jet operations are:

- Adverse weather
- Inadequate aeronautical services
- CFIT
- Aircraft design related to highly automated aircraft human factors.

Australia could, and should, lead the world in airline operational safety. After all, the first three factors I have mentioned do not pose large problems in this country.

This leaves the design of highly automated cockpits and human factors as areas where we are most vulnerable.

Both our major airlines have young, modern fleets, and the admirable airline product in this country is being enjoyed by more and more people at rates which are undoubtedly the cheapest in the world.

We have not had in this country, the salary givebacks, the downward pressure on benefits and conditions that have plagued the US and European scene over the past ten years, pressures that are not conducive to retaining expertise or promoting safety.

The merger of Australian and Qantas and the subsequent float have seen governments bow out of the airline scene, and rapid growth in domestic passengers, even during the worst recession in sixty years, but there are projected increases in capacity that may inflict severe pressure on profits. Because of these pressures it is essential that structures are in place in both airline management and the safety regulating body to ensure that the public goodwill toward jet air travel, built up over the past thirty years continues unabated.

The smaller end of the regional airline industry, however, suffers from the fact that many of the cabin twin types that started us in the industry 28 years ago are no longer in production, and available replacement equipment may both be too large and too expensive.

The very cheapness of these older and smaller types of aircraft have attracted new operators to the regional industry because they see easy profits.

When the government deregulated the trunk airline industry in 1990, they also banned the importation of stage two jets for airline use in this country, for obvious reasons. Any aircraft imported for start-ups had to be either stage three or young enough to be economically hush kitted.

In other words, they created a fairly level playing field for competitive services.

Isn't it ironic then that anywhere in the world a person can buy an airline ticket and end up on a single-pilot, no cabin attendant aircraft, flying over hundreds of miles of ocean on an Australian airline?

Since the last Safesies Conference here in Canberra the Australian regional airline industry has not covered itself in glory. Two well-publicised accidents ([Monarch in 1993](#) and [Seaview in 1994](#)—see 'Accidents' in the Resources section) have led to yet another restructure of the regulatory bodies charged with the oversight of aviation operations and the hope of us all is that we have learnt from the mistakes of the past five years.

Unlike the airline industry, the regulatory body, the then CAA, restructured in such a way that most of the longer-term experienced staff found it attractive to move on. I am not saying the restructuring was unnecessary, but that we are committed to repeating the mistakes of the past unless we recognise the benefit of retaining long-term experienced staff with good field knowledge of the industry.

When the regional or commuter industry got under way here in 1968, 28,000 passengers were carried in the first 12 months of operation. There were no turboprop operations until the 1970s. Last year the regional-industry carried 3,100,000 passengers, some 90 per cent of whom travelled in turboprop aircraft, and most of those in full airline performance aircraft.

The latest International Air Transport Association (IATA) technical report identified risk factors for future turboprop operations, the number 1 factor being – ***Inadequate or non-existent operator standards.***

In an effort to learn from the past, this risk factor must be addressed by the new Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). It is true to say that everyone involved in the industry knew, and knows, just who we might be talking about here in Australia. It is true that quite a few of the regulators knew, so just how did that knowledge continue to be ignored?

Unfortunately, the public do not know, and buy a ticket to somewhere on a carrier that even the travel agent may suspect, but is unable, for obvious reasons, to qualify. People involved in the field surveillance of airlines must have an intimate knowledge of the industry, not necessarily just of some other discipline in aviation.

Those further up in the hierarchy, and the structure should be as flat as possible, must also have an intimate knowledge of the industry so any action necessary can be rational and swift.

Other risk factors are visual approaches in instrument conditions. The design of many instrument approach procedures leaves a lot to be desired, and indicate that the designer has never sat up front in an aircraft when it is carrying out a night time, bad weather approach.

Crew resource management is another discipline that needs to become a requirement in the regional industry on an ongoing basis, as we have found that with older personnel it can take years to refine and implant the total crew culture.

Being human, we all make mistakes, errors of judgement, but with increased knowledge and improving technology, we aim to improve the barriers and filters between those human mistakes and an accident.

In the past, it has been accepted that operators such as engineers, pilots, air traffic controllers and flight attendants were the major cause of these barriers being breached. However, the mistakes that are most critical in our industry are those made by management, whether that management is an airline, a service provider such as ATC, a regulatory body or government.

The C.I.T. in Australia is to be congratulated on organising this forum on aviation safety. Thank you.