

Promoting Safety - An Olympic Effort

The Sydney 2000 Olympics were staged between 16 September and 1 October 2000. Australia knew it would host those Olympics seven years before. It was not until the final year that Australian aviation began to comprehend the enormous air safety task that the Olympics were to pose.

The Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) decided in 1999 that a major safety promotion campaign would be required. The campaign was based on CASA's belief in safe skies for all and aimed for an incident free games while recognising major temporary changes which would affect the aviation system and pilots.

Some systemic problems had been identified much earlier. For example, the concern about Violations of Controlled Airspace (VCA) had been studied and action taken.

The VCA study showed that in the Sydney area 15% of international pilots were responsible for VCAs and that other itinerant and low recency pilots made up the remaining bulk of those who entered controlled airspace without a clearance. Many reasons were identified, including navigation difficulties, unfamiliarity with the area and changes to airspace and radio procedures.

Safety Promotion Division of CASA had prepared guides for VFR private pilots. These guides, the VFR Flight Guide and Visual Pilot Guides for the Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne areas, had proved invaluable and were helping to contain the number of VCAs. CASA decided to build on this success.

Other systemic problems included GAAP procedures (which are uniquely Australian), Flight Security Zones and Olympic Venue Restricted Areas (both of which were to be introduced only for the Olympics), radio frequency changes, increased traffic and unfamiliar pilots operating in unpredictable numbers.

The Flight Security Zones and Olympic Venue Restricted Areas (OVRAs) were a major problem. They were introduced for two reasons; to control the amount of traffic and to manage any security threats. There were two Flight Security Zones, one to the west of Bankstown and one to the north. The requirement before a pilot could operate in these zones was to obtain a discrete transponder code and to transmit that code. This meant that most VFR operations through Bankstown required such a code.

The OVRAs were more closely controlled. Any pilot wishing to operate in an OVRA had to be accredited before the flight and stringent clearances were issued. The NSW government introduced a fine of \$250,000 for any operator who entered an OVRA without a clearance. The air safety concern was for the number of visual aircraft and particularly helicopters which would be operating over specific Olympic events.

For security reasons, the NSW Police airwing operated continuous flights in the Sydney area and through the restricted areas and security zones.

Other safety problems which CASA had to consider included laser operations from the top of high, Sydney buildings, F111 flypasts at night through the Sydney Control Zone, operations of float planes and helicopters from Sydney Harbour and off various

vessels, noise concerns which limited the airspace available, airspace and scenic route designs and deadlines to complete our material in time to be of use for the Olympic period.

CASA adopted a strategy of promoting safety which relied on education and communication. The temporary changes had to be highlighted to local Sydney pilots. The wider Sydney area implications which affected all pilots had to be suitably communicated. And CASA decided that as there would be some international pilots who would take the opportunity to see more of Australia, information on general Australian operations should be provided.

A guide, which built on the concepts of the VFR Flight Guide and Visual Pilots Guide, was developed. This guide contained all the information a pilot required to operate in the Sydney area during the Olympics. It consolidated all the information from 18 AIP supplements; it provided information for international pilots, particularly on validation of licences; it gave contact details for aviation organisations and agencies, including the government organisations, fuel, customs, airports and many others; it provided a colour chart for every day of the Olympics showing which Olympic venues were active and the times; it provided similar information for the restricted zones; it provided essential information on each of Sydney's four airports; and it gave coloured charts of each of the three scenic routes as well as entry and exit information for Sydney's three main GA airports, Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park.

From this guide, a web site and CD ROM were developed. The CD ROM was placed into the inside cover of the guide.

The web site - flyingaustralia.com - included all the information in the published guide. It also allowed a person to 'fly' the scenic routes and entry and exit to the three main GA airports. Each flight included photos of identifying landmarks, cautions, radio communications, altitudes, radio frequency and other essential information.

The web site also included the ability to 'free fly', that is to click on any part of any flight to review the requirements at that point. A self-test capability with a number of questions and answers was another feature.

The CD ROM was similar, except that it allowed more flexibility and actual pilot-ATC voice communications were used.

Once this material was ready, CASA Safety Promotion officers visited a number of aerodromes and briefed schools and other interested operators on the process and the use of CASA material. The schools could then brief other pilots and, in particular, assist international pilots with licence validation.

During an extended Olympics period, flight briefing offices were opened at Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park. These offices provided assistance to pilots, particularly VFR, to encourage them to fly and to help them understand the changes. Olympic guides were issued from these centres, computers were available for pilots to view the CD ROM and NAIPS flight planning was available with assistance from Safety Promotion officers.

The lessons learnt from this exercise will be useful for other campaigns.

- Costs are hard to estimate and can be much higher than predicted.
- Using new technology, as we were with the web site, requires the use of the best experienced people possible.
- Advertising is expensive, particularly using popular international magazines, but it is also essential; a specific strategy is necessary.
- Different agencies have different and legitimate priorities. These need to be determined very early so an overall strategy can be developed.
- Suitable accommodation can be both expensive and difficult to find.
- Top level support in each organisation is essential and people at the top level must be prepared to support their organisation.
- Personal briefings are invaluable. Electronic methods of briefing still do not allow sufficient interaction for many people.
- Electronic methods of promoting safety, particularly web sites and CD ROMs, allow much more flexibility in presentation than traditional methods and are accessed by large and increasing numbers of people.

The safety promotion strategy was a success. Sydney averaged less than two violations of controlled airspace each day (compared with one every four minutes during the Atlanta Olympics) and the period was largely incident free. The only accident was a wheels up landing at Bankstown.

Although the Olympics are over the effort continues. CASA continues to build on the Visual Pilot Guides and VFR Flight Guide and on the CD ROM and website concepts. A Visual Pilot Guide for the Perth area is on the way with the flying sequences completed. The latest version of the VFR Flight Guide will soon be available. An Adelaide area Visual Pilot Guide is the next program. Each of these will be available on CD ROM with the older Visual Pilot Guides also available as they are amended. It is also intended that many of our presentations will be converted to CD ROM.