



# Interior Refits at Walkers Upholstery

**WALKERS** Upholstery may be based in Alexandra, Central Otago but aircraft nationwide have had their interior refits carried out by the small team of Steve and Margaret Whitren and Mark Booth. Originally from the Auckland region where Steve and Margaret were associated with automotive trim company Vintrim, business branched out to conduct work for a number of North Shore aerial operators. Now with more than 20 years experience of the aviation interior refit industry, their collective knowledge of aircraft interior materials and fabrics is second to none.

Walkers Upholstery sources all its materials from suppliers of fire-rated foams and fabrics. Material for helicopter sling seats is also fire-rated and interior carpet is sourced from Aircraft Interiors of Nelson. All materials have their inflammability tested by Flight Tech of New Plymouth.

Setting up shop in Alexandra was more by happenstance than planning. Steve and Margaret were touring in the area, liked the features of the region and by securing work as a contractor to an established Alexandra upholstery business owned by Barry Walker, Steve was able to ply his skills as an upholsterer to both his automotive interests and a growing aircraft clientele. The opportunity for the Whitrens to purchase the business arose in 2005.

As well as the more routine interior refurbishments Steve's team have undertaken a number of innovative projects, particularly regarding helicopter refits and more recently modified seats for tourist tandem parachute operations. When KiwiFlyer visited the shop Mark Booth was applying the finishing touches to a pilot's seat

for SkyDive Lake Wanaka's PAC 750XL. Here the pilot is sitting in the seat wearing a parachute for a greater part of the day and as the original seat wasn't designed for this activity, subsequently the seat back has been subject to an LAME approved modification.

Broadly the modification consists of the back being modified to encompass the pilot's parachute pack and the seat base being lengthened to allow for seat back cushion, parachute and pilot.

Increasingly carpet sets and side panels are made up in the Alexandra workshop and sent out to engineers to install while aircraft are in for maintenance. With arrangements in place for a local embroiderer to create aircraft names and logos, Steve says that seat backs and seat bases can easily be monogrammed to the owner's preferences. Walkers Upholstery also have on hand a large number of patterns to make up exterior aircraft covers on demand.

Steve is a well-known classic car buff and he finds this style of upholstery fits in well with classic aircraft. A growing number of Tiger Moths, Austers and other classic types from further afield have benefitted from his skills. While local operators based in and around Queenstown are well established customers, nearby Wanaka is a growing source of work with the increasing number of tourist operators and

aircraft overhaul facilities setting up shop there. Local operators and maintenance providers appreciate the service Walkers Upholstery offers where seats can be removed from aircraft and stripped and recovered in nearby Alexandra. It should be noted also that Alexandra has its own airfield and owners regularly arrive and leave their aircraft at the field for the necessary work to be carried out before returning to fly home when completed.

Walkers Upholstery welcome enquiries from aircraft owners regardless of their location. See below for contact details.



Above: Mark Booth with a PAC750 pilot's seat. Right: A range of templates are on hand for aircraft cover manufacturing.



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## WALKERS UPHOLSTERY (2005) LIMITED

### *Aircraft Interiors for Pilots by Pilots*



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