

The Aviation Community Advisory Group

contributed by Qwilton Biel

Elections to the Aviation Community Advisory Group will be held on November 19 at the Wellington Airport Conference Centre with nominations for available positions closing on September 11. In this issue's Guest Comment, Qwilton Biel explains the purpose and history of ACAG as well as why and how aviators with an interest in the rule development process should become involved. Qwilton has 16 years aviation management experience and is presently Chief Executive of Heli Harvest Ltd. He has been appointed to sit in the Aviation Industry Association's permanent seat on ACAG.



THE TRANSITION from Civil Aviation Regulations to Civil Aviation Rules in the mid-1990's was heralded as the dawn of a new era where rules and guidance material could be implemented or amended with minimal difficulty and short timelines. However history has delivered a somewhat different outcome.

Over the intervening years numerous initiatives have been undertaken to expedite the rules development process. These began with informal lobbying and working groups and have progressed to the CAA Industry Rules Advisory Group (CIRAG), then since 2005 to the Aviation Community Advisory Group (ACAG). This has become the body entrusted to reflect the interests of the wider aviation community in exchanges with the CAA on rules matters.

ACAG has a defined role and purpose within its terms of reference but in a nutshell it is intended to facilitate and promote the participation of interested persons in the rule development process. It is an 11 member group with six elected members and five permanent members. It meets 3 times a year and holds an annual election forum.

Through stable membership, a commitment by each of its members to continuously strive to improve the rulemaking process and working as a cohesive group, ACAG has developed a very positive relationship with both the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Transport on all matters pertaining to rule development.

When it comes to rule development the temptation always exists for aviation community participants to advocate only their particular areas of interest and to diverge into consideration of non-rule issues which are the topic of the moment. ACAG has thankfully not fallen into this trap.

Achievements of ACAG

The products of ACAG's work are not always readily apparent to the wider aviation community. It has worked to achieve an alignment of project management processes and software between the CAA and MOT thereby reducing duplication of effort. It has instigated a more robust procedure for nomination of subject matter experts onto Project Working Groups. It has engaged with the Minister of Transport to advocate the case that rules are the infrastructure upon which aviation is founded and therefore these require maintenance and enhancement just like bricks and mortar infrastructure does. And in the last year, ACAG has developed and advocated a community wide position encouraging the expeditious adoption of Performance Based Navigation (PBN) in New Zealand.

Current objectives

Notwithstanding the aforementioned efforts, the rule development timeline remains excessively long. When analysed on paper, the process should be achievable in 20 months. At the present time it is taking between seven and nine years to complete.

At its most recent meeting, ACAG unanimously adopted the goal of progressing a rule from project start to Minister's signature in 24 months. This was conveyed to both CAA and MOT who acknowledged it as a worthwhile objective for all parties.

As an initial step toward this 24 month goal, ACAG has received a comprehensive summary of the 250+ issues logged by the CAA as potentially requiring rulemaking action. This is the first time this complete list has been available to the aviation community and ACAG believes that engagement at this early stage is essential to streamlining the subsequent steps of issue assessment and rule development.

I am privileged to have been appointed to sit in AIA's permanent seat on the ACAG. Having been involved with the development for the Civil Aviation Rules from the beginning it is a disappointment to me that they have never achieved the level of administrative simplicity promised at the outset, however I firmly believe that ACAG is making more progress towards achieving this than has been made by any other means in recent years.

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How to become involved

Every year, two elected positions on ACAG are up for renewal. Interested persons are invited to attend the ACAG Election Forum on 19 November 2009, 1300 hrs at the Wellington Airport Conference Centre.

One of the key attributes of ACAG is our stable group taking a long term view on regulatory development. You can expect an update on broad issues regarding regulatory development in our aviation industry, with presentations from invited speakers in key industry decision making roles.

Qwilton Biel

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