

### **MAAA President Report 2017**

I take pleasure in presenting my report to the MAAA Council for the year ending June 2017.

After much of the turmoil surrounding the failed amalgamation of the three New South Ordinary members in the 2016 year I must say that the past year has been less tumultuous, that is not to say it has been without problems and organizational issues, most of which the Executive have been able to deal with.

#### **CLUB VISITS - EVENTS**

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to visit a number of MAAA clubs and major MAAA events outside of my home state. On all occasions, I must say that the hospitality shown to myself and my wife (when she has accompanied me) by the club members has been nothing more than outstanding. During these visits, I have taken the opportunity to speak to grass root members and I am pleased to say that the majority have been satisfied with the progress the MAAA is making. Reports in respect to the introduction of our on-line magazine "Wingspan", the introduction of the club assistance scheme and the assistance given by the Federal Secretary have all been positive. Members have also raised issue of individual concern and these have been discussed in a non-confrontational manner. Some issues I have been able to solve, others are being worked on.

One of the most memorable events was the re-running of the Luskintyre RC Scale Festival. The event has not been run by an MAAA Club for a number of years and this event proved to be a challenge for the organisers. To their credit, they did an outstanding job and again proved that MAAA members can organise and run large public model events successfully and safely. For those who have not visited the Luskintyre site, I urge them to plan to attend the next event. All I can say is that it was fantastic, the quality of the models and the skill of the pilots was superb. I also thank the owners of the Luskintyre Airstrip for allowing us to use their superb facilities.

During August 2016, I had the opportunity to visit the two Alice Springs Clubs, the purpose being to present member Bob Vigers with an MAAA Service Medallion. Bob received this medallion for his services to the MAAA in establishing an aeromodelling museum in the old Connellan Airways hangars in central Alice Springs. Bob has done an excellent job in establishing this piece of MAAA memorabilia. Alice Springs has two MAAA Clubs, Alice Fun Flyers and Alice Springs Radio Modelers, and fortunately I had the opportunity to visit both. Again the hospitality shown by members was excellent. Both clubs are excellently managed and the Alice Springs Radio Modelers boast an all-weather bitumen strip. Whilst there, I had the opportunity to discuss with both clubs the possibility of enlarging the Museum and also the running of a "Masters Aeromodelling event" in conjunction with the Alice Springs "Master Games". Both clubs were keen to discuss the two ventures in more detail.

In July, members of the MASA Instructor Training Team were invited to Hobart and Launceston to demonstrate and run two of the revised Instructor Training Courses. During the running of both of these courses, I took the opportunity to talk to members and inspect club facilities. I will say that the quality of many Australian club facilities far outweighs many of those overseas. MAAA members should be proud of what has been achieved over the past forty plus years. During August both the Federal Secretary and I attended the Gold Coast and witnessed the inaugural MAAA FPV Nationals. This event proved to be very successful and attracted members from all States including some who took the long journey from Western Australia. The spotlight

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was well and truly on the event organisers as CASA officials showed an interest in the safety aspect. Several CASA officials attended and offered advice to organisers; this advice was taken in the spirit in which it was given and helped to ensure a successful event. I again took the opportunity to discuss MAAA issues with members in particular in respect to the future of FPV racing. The second MAAA FPV Nationals will again be run on the Gold Coast in July 2017.

In October, I once again attended the Twin Cities annual Float Plane event and as usual had a good three days flying off the water. For those who like float plane flying or those who have an interest, I recommend you attend this event. It is different from the usual land based flying events and the array of models is spectacular.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

A major challenge to all sporting and volunteer organisations today is attracting membership and the MAAA is no different. Although we attract on the average around 750 new members each year, our total membership base remains static. In other words, we are only replacing those who opt out of the hobby. The Executive together with our marketing people, have completed a substantial review of membership losses, specifically in respect to the demographics of those who are not rejoining. A full detailed analysis of these results will be detailed at the forthcoming Council Conference.

The Marketing report presented provides an insight into the state of our membership at this point of time. In short clubs are growing by 13 percent per year; however, membership attrition amounted to 19 percent. I conducted a small straw poll in South Australia in respect to these results and questioned member clubs in respect to the non-renewals. It appears those who did not renew are either our older members who have either passed on or are no longer confident. Others are members who have joined a club, experienced the "joy of flight" and decided for a number of reasons it is not for them.

The problems of static membership is not only an MAAA issue, it is an issue confronting most of our state associations and clubs. Look around your boardroom, determine what the average age of your membership is and then ask the question will we have a problem sustaining our membership base in the near future. If the answer is yes then your club and State Associations, like the MAAA must take proactive steps to reverse the trend.

The MAAA is taking a two-stepped approach, firstly by developing a marketing plan titled "Towards 11,000" and secondly by devoting a substantial amount of time to discuss ways forward. These discussions will include looking at where we are now, how we operate and what must change to continue into the future. As I said before the MAAA cannot do it alone; it is not only an MAAA issue, we all, Ordinary Members and Clubs must:

- Own the problem
- Work towards recruiting and retaining new members
- Change our boardrooms committees and procedures
- Encourage younger members to become involved
- Embrace new trends in aeromodelling.

As an example, I have heard some clubs will not embrace FPV flying and multi rotors and guess what, they are using the same arguments used when radio control and later helicopters burst onto the aeromodelling scene. This is a head in the sand attitude, denying the continual changes in aeromodelling will be at the club's own peril. I have lost count of how many times I have heard members say a multi rotor is not a model aircraft.

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### **CORPORATE STRUCTURE**

The MAAA's corporate structure is the most appropriate and proven structure to manage the administration of aeromodelling in Australia. It provides an individual voice through clubs and state associations to present the best possible outcomes. If member clubs listen to their members and participate in State Association meetings, then the Executives of those associations, who effectively form the MAAA Council, can provide an input into the national scene; through our membership of ASAC members also have a voice on the world aeromodelling scene.

On saying this however, we should not sit on our laurels and must be prepared to change. Consequently the Council members at the 2017 Conference will consider and decide:

- The strategic direction as to membership
- Will the MAAA corporate structure suit the needs of tomorrow?
- What will the MAAA look like in the future?
- What the MAAA's priorities should be?
- Should the MAAA allow direct membership - How this will be implemented?
- Is there need to be a change in our current membership payment procedures?
- What other forms of membership should be looked at e.g. yearly, monthly, pro-rata?
- Should the MAAA examine structures similar to USA and UK?
- Should the MAAA stay with traditional aeromodelling or does it embrace new technology?
- How will the MAAA Recruit and retain members?
- What will be the MAAA's approach to Commercial Corporate Organisations?

### **CIVIL AVIATION SAFETY AUTHORITY (CASA)**

As the only Recreational Aviation Administrative Organisation (RAAO) for model aircraft, the MAAA's excellent association with CASA continues. Over the past year we have had a number of vigorous discussions with CASA on a number of topics. I am pleased to say both organisations have at all times agreed on a consensus position.

Recently, for improved administrative purposes, CASA moved aeromodelling from the Sports Aviation Section to the Remotely Piloted Aircraft Section (RPAS). We hope that under the RPAS we will receive an increased level service. The Federal Secretary and I have had a number of discussions with personnel from this area and have been pleased with the outcomes. The current CASA member responsible for model aircraft is a past aeromodeller (no, he is not old) and an ex member of the MAAA, subsequently he has a better understanding on how the MAAA and clubs operate. Already we have seen improvements in the speed of assessments for height clearances, display permits and area approvals.

The old Part 149 saga continues with CASA still no declaring a final implementation date. The MAAA and other RAAO's have raised concerns in respect to several matters, both from a legal and administrative perspective. The issue of whether being Part 149 member is the right path for the MAAA is still concerning me, especially in respect to the additional administrative burden and the few benefits received. From a strategic perspective it is of great benefit as the MAAA will still remain the officially CASA recognised Aeromodelling organisation however; when other

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organisations appear to get the same benefits with less administrative controls and weaker corporate structures, one must question the worth. I have taken this up with CASA on a number of occasions and will continue to do so. Those who I have spoken to appear to understand however I have not made up my mind yet as to whether they are only paying us lip service.

Another issue recently highlighted is the respect CASA has for the sanctity of the MAAA's intellectual property. CASA recognises the fact our MOPs are subject to copy-write and cannot be replicated by other organisations however; it appears this recognition is not considered when CASA issues permits to other organisations on conditions identical to our MOPs. CASA's holds the view that it is up to the MAAA to take up the issue of copy-write. To me this position is not acceptable. If CASA wants the MAAA to work with them and we have much correspondence stating this, then they need to also respect our position. I have taken this matter up with senior members of the CASA hierarchy and will continue to do so, especially in respect to the consequences of Part 149. The Executive has sought legal advice on this subject and will continue to pursue the issue.

### **AIR SPORTS AUSTRALIA CONFEDERATE (ASAC)**

The MAAA remains a member of ASAC and does so because it is a requirement of our FAI membership. ASAC has over the years assisted the MAAA on a number of fronts and has on occasions opened doors to government officials.

Over the years ASAC has kept a low profile when it came to marketing but this has recently changed. ASAC now has a website which promotes all Sports Aviation activities and is looking to provide more support for individual organisation events.

### **OTHER ISSUES**

#### **Legal Fees**

Many will ask the question why has the legal Fees gone over budget this year. The answer is simple. In today's litigious society prior to giving any opinion in respect to the MAAA Constitution and other legal issues raised by members, the Executive must ensure the right interpretation is made. The only way to satisfy all is to obtain legal advice. I have in the past provided my interpretation of issues however on occasion these have not been accepted. As a consequence, I have made a conscious decision I would no longer do this. I advise that if a member raises an issue requiring a concise interpretation or has the possibility of exposing the MAAA, then legal advice will be sought.

The Constitution is not the only area where the MAAA Executive has had to rely on legal interpretation. On more than one occasions we have been approached by members and clubs in respect to disciplinary processes etc.; again when these questions raised the possibility of legal exposure, legal advice was obtained. Legal advice has also been obtained in respect to the implications of the introduction of Part 149, the Senate Enquiry into remotely piloted aircraft and other highly sensitive and confidential issues.

#### **Senate Enquiry**

As are all aware, the Senate has established an enquiry into the use and control of remotely piloted aircraft. Although not specifically directed at the sports and hobby flyers, we have been caught up in the net. This enquiry came about for two reasons namely complaints to Senator

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Nick Xenophon in respect to several incidents involving full size aviation and the proposed changes by CASA to regulation relating to commercial operation of “drones”.

To ensure an appropriate response was submitted, the MAAA Executive sought legal advice. As a result of this advice the Executive submitted a very detailed response.

The MAAA Secretary attended the first hearing conducted at the Dalby Flying Field and then the local town hall. The Secretary was able to obtain an insight on the direction of the hearing, what the major concerns were and possible ways forward. No doubt the Secretary will include these items in his report.

The following is an extract from the latest media release:

*“As the inquiry has progressed, it has become apparent to the committee that the safety regulations regarding drone use have not kept up with a rapidly-growing industry, and that immediate action should be taken to make drone use safer. In particular, there are growing concerns both within the aviation industry and amongst the general public about the safety of recreational drone use. These concerns emanate from an increasing number of reports of aviation incidents and mounting fears of the real prospect of a serious accident”.....*

*“The committee wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Darren Chester MP in April strongly encouraging strengthened regulation of this sector in three key areas:*

***Safety awareness and training*** – recreational drone users should have to undergo training and safety awareness before purchasing and using drones;

***Registration and tracking*** – the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) should be empowered to track all individual drones, starting with the registration of all drones, regardless of their size or intended use; and

***Aviation safety*** – to minimize the potential for collisions between drones and aircraft and to protect controlled airspace and airports, geofencing technology should be introduced for individual drones and/or drone shields should be employed in high traffic areas.

*The committee will further consider these and other safety measures, including mandatory flight”.*

The MAAA is well positioned to assist the senate in their endeavours and will continue to liaise with the committee to achieve an acceptable outcome for members.

### **Land Purchases**

I am pleased to say that State Associations are still recognizing the fact that if we own our model fields, we are more in control of our destiny. In the last 12 months the MAAA has purchased a field at Bacchus Marsh and are in the process of purchasing a field in South Australia. Unfortunately the closer a proposed flying field is to residential areas, the more difficulty we have with the purchase. The South Australian purchase has currently been approved by the Council and the Development Assessment Board however two local residents have appealed the decisions and we must now take the issue to the Courts.

### **Club Assistance Scheme**

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Once again eleven clubs availed themselves of the opportunity to participate in the club assistance scheme. All clubs were awarded all or part of the amounts applied for. The Club Assistance scheme has been a highly successful initiative and many clubs have benefited. The scheme is however to be funded from interest gained from investments. When the scheme was first introduced interest rates were much higher than what they are today. If we are to continue with the Club Assistance Scheme the MAAA Council needs to decide how the scheme will be funded. Obviously the interest return on our investments at the moment is low.

### **Corporate Partnerships**

With the advent of the rapid increase in popularity of FPV racing and multi-rotor aircraft (commonly referred to as Drones) new challenges are being presented. Many commercial operators are attempting to develop businesses which cater for the multi-rotor phenomena both in the area of commercial application and sport. Many have recognised the efforts the MAAA in establishing safety procedures for model aircraft and are making approaches to use our intellectual property.

These approaches have the potential to open many opportunities for the MAAA members and aeromodelling in general however the advantages also come with risk. We need to ensure member rights and services are not affected in any way and must ensure any arrangements entered into are in the best interest of members.

The MAAA has recently been approached by a company, Freedom Drones Sports, who have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the FAI to establish giant drone racing. This company is an Australian company and as the MAAA is the FAI representative in Australia for model aircraft, they have approached us with a view of forming a partnership to develop the initiative. The Executive has had initial discussions with this organisation and have requested a business plan to be developed and forwarded for consideration.

### **FPV Racing Royal Adelaide Show**

As a follow on from the MAAA FPV Nationals I, in my position of MAAA President, was approached by the Royal Agriculture and Horticultural Society South Australia to assist in developing a FPV event for the Royal Adelaide Show. The concept was to run the event over a 10 day period, at night under flood lights. I agreed to assist on the condition there was no financial exposure to the MAAA. This request proved a challenge to all concerned both in obtaining a permit from CASA and technicality issues relating to video and frequency interference. \$25,000 in prize money was put up by the RA&HS. I am pleased to say that all obstacles were overcome and the event proved to be a winner both from a MAAA perspective and also for the RA&HS; so much so they intend to run a bigger and better event this year with. A number of members of other organisations participated in the event on the condition they join the MAAA, this they did willingly.

In closing I would like to thank the efforts of the Federal Secretary and the support provided to me by the Executive and Ordinary members.

Neil Tank  
President  
Model Aeronautical Association Australia.