



VSA AIRFIELDS, AIRSPACE AND AVIONICS OFFICER'S REPORT

The following airspace and aerodrome issues affecting VSA members were raised in the past 12 months:

1. Increased Enroute Class E Airspace

In December 2021 Airservices consulted industry on a proposal to lower the base of Class E airspace to 1,500ft (AGL) in medium and high density enroute airspace between Cairns and Melbourne. The proposal did not get through the CASA Office of Airspace Regulation but undeterred, Airservices recently issues a revised proposal to lower the base of Class E airspace to 6,500ft (AGL). GFA responded to the consultation that it was not in favour of the proposal as, in its view, most of the concerns of the first proposal were addressed adequately by the revised proposal. GFA noted the safety case presented was unconvincing and poorly substantiated. Similarly, the economic case presented also unconvincing and unsubstantiated. GFA conveyed *"The adverse safety outcomes from the proposal have not been realistically factored into the safety case, the modelling assumptions are considered dubious. The proposal will concentrate non-transponder equipped VFR aircraft below 6500' with the resulting increase in VFR-VFR mid-air collision risks. The reduced airspace over the Great Dividing Range will also reduce options for VFR On Top of low cloud, concentrate VFR traffic in lower visibility airspace below cloud and close to terrain, and increase Controlled Flight into Terrain risks."*

2. Access to Class A Airspace

As reported last year, CASA unilaterally chose not to renew the instrument allowing gliders to access Class A airspace. The long-awaited approval for gliders to operate into Class A airspace was finally received on 15 July 2022 and will expire when the Part 103 MOS commences. Until then, gliders, which are Part 103 aircraft, are not required to carry ADS-B or transponders in controlled airspace as Regulation 103.K that requires this refers to the MOS that has not yet been finalised.

3. Model Aircraft Operations at Ararat

The Grampians Soaring Club and the Ararat District Aeromodellers Club are in discussion about a proposed application to CASA to approve model aircraft access to airspace above 400ft AGL in the vicinity of Ararat aerodrome.

4. Solar Farm Near Benalla

In June 2022 advice was received via GCV that the Minister of Planning Victoria intended to grant a Planning Permit to construct a solar farm at Lake Mokoan. Another four solar farms are proposed around Goorambat. It was also noted that the Glenrowan wind farm has just been approved for construction. I have not heard any more from GCV on this matter, but it is doubtful CASA will be involved as solar panels do not intrude into airspace.

5. Surveillance Flight Information Service Mangalore

Last year Airservices worked with industry to introduce a Surveillance Flight Information Service Mangalore (SFIS MNG) to reduce the elevated risk level identified in the designated airspace volume surrounding Mangalore Airport (YMNG). The Civil Aviation Safety Authority's Office of Airspace Regulation (CASA OAR) did not accept Airservices proposal and decided to conduct an Aeronautical Study of the airspace around Mangalore, extending 25 nautical miles from YMNG. The draft Aeronautical Study report was completed around July, when it was released by the CASA OAR for industry feedback. The period for responses closed on 11 August 2022.

Christopher Thorpe
19 August 2021