



Australian Federation of Air Pilots

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION

to the

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and
Rural Affairs and Transport**

Regarding

***Pilot Training
and
Airline Safety***

25 February 2011

Supplementary Submission

Dear Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a supplementary submission.

The Australian Federation of Air Pilots provided a full written submission to the Inquiry in late October 2010. Shortly after this, we posted a copy of the submission on our website and encouraged all members to read it and provide further feedback.

On the basis of this further feedback, particularly from experienced overseas members, we would like to make the following supplementary submissions regarding:

- Third party training providers;
- Low time pilots; and
- Cadet programs.

Third Party Training Providers

The feedback from our membership has been strong and unequivocal in the need for and value of an experienced and well-resourced internal training department within an airline. By way of example, a member with overseas experience who has recently returned to Australia commented, inter alia, as follows:

“I have worked extensively at several levels in airline training departments across two airlines; one an overseas major international first level carrier with a well-funded training organisation; the other an Australian based low cost international carrier. Both of these airlines used third party trainers/ instructors for their aircraft type transition training and the non-regulatory component of recurrent training.

Apart from the cost saving offset, there are two major impacts of the non-use of an airline’s own instructor force on type rating training; the quality of trainee produced by the system and the lack of experience established amongst the instructor pilots of the airline.

The Students

The lack of quality product produced by such a training system is obvious by the additional sessions required after the type rating course. Were these pilots trained by qualified instructor-pilots who train not only in the simulator but also fly and train in the aircraft, these additional sessions would not be required. Additionally habits and practices that are not SOP compliant develop during the type rating training where the sessions are overseen by third party instructors who do not fly the aircraft and as such are distinctly unfamiliar with the operational environment under which their students are supposed to be trained to perform....

.....Our training organisation regularly encounters inappropriate practices on the line that can be traced back to the initial training received during the type rating.

This problem becomes acute when crews who return to the simulator for 6 month recurrent training re-encounter third party trainers from outside the airline. These sessions should incorporate the best of the line flight experience augmented by training scenarios that promote an operational training experience that cannot be achieved during initial type rating training due to inexperience with the aircraft..... This training becomes a box ticking exercise, or re-introduces or re-enforces previously learned poor procedural behaviours.

The Instructors

Today's low cost carrier instructor will never see type transition training other than their initial conversion course onto the aircraft. They will never see this training as an instructor, will never benefit from seeing the mistakes made by multiple students over time attempting similar sequences in the rich variety of ways endemic to the human condition. They will never be able to absorb the lessons of these observations, use them in their own flying and training and pass them onto future generations of students and instructors. The lack of an airlines own instructional force involved in type rating training produces a significant and measurable lack of depth in the instructional staff. Today's sim instructors have never taught the vast majority of potential non normal sequences. Intellectually they will know how the aircraft and systems are supposed to behave in the various non- normal conditions documented in the manuals; but they won't have seen it happen nor watch other pilots dealing with them. Type training is a hothouse of learning and a concentrated environment where the potential to learn as an instructor is tremendous; I believe the loss of this environment for the airlines instructors is a significant safety impact.

Another significant, often overlooked impact is the reduction in instructor numbers per overall pilot numbers in the airline. Instructors and Examiners are a unique resource in the airline. They are approached and usually approachable as a resource for all pilots – every

pilot has a favourite instructor they approach when queries or problems arise.....Third party instructors in the simulator have significantly reduced the number of instructor pilots on the line, again I believe with a significant negative impact on safety and standards.

The airline I work for has instructors and check captains who have never performed type rating training. They have never taught basic sequences such as stalling and aircraft envelope training events. They have never seen most of the single and multiple non- normals that are scripted in the initial type rating training and are only occasionally included in recurrent training...

The reason for this is cost – Instructors being line Captains are an expensive resource to employ and an expensive resource to pull off the line to train pilots. But there is a reason for this expense requirement. This is only one of the many areas of airline aviation where the old adage is true – You think Training is Expensive – Try Ignorance.

Low Time Pilots

In regard to the incorporation of low time pilots into major airlines, one member with significant training experience within Australian and overseas has provided the following insight:

“In Germany and elsewhere in Europe ab-initio first officers can start line flying in large jet aircraft, typically Boeing 737 or Airbus A310/320/321 and now Embraer 179/190 series, with as little as 350 hours total aircraft hours. On completion of line training these 'new' minted F/O's are released to line flying with as little as 450 hours in their logbooks. In 1990/91 I was involved in the line training as a supervisor for over 35 first officers at least half of whom had no more than 350 hours at commencement of line flying with 144 passengers on board through some of the densest airspace in the world and into some of the busiest non-major airports often with less than ideal ATC services. After transfer to the B757/767 fleet I was often given the 'new minted' newly released F/O's for their first 'line crew' experience with almost all having no more than 450 hours and now with up to 280/290 passengers and an aircraft in the 120 to 180 ton range. Same airspace and airports.

Without doubt commercial pressure WILL force training down to the minima as required and stated in the rules and allowed by the authority.”

In a follow-up email this member continues, inter alia:

“The big point is that without the training we received in Australia both formally, and after checkout informally, from the more experienced crew members we worked with, many or most of us would have struggled hugely to cope in the strange environments we found ourselves...

The best pilots we observed in this foreign environment were as good as anyone will find all over the world. The range of the average pilots was wider than we were used to It is wise to remember that it is the 'Average Pilot', the majority by numbers on the line, who create the safety record by virtue of flying the most of the line flying in revenue services. We also found a bigger number of below average and marginal pilots.....

A Safety Culture does not develop on its own or from paying attention only to the training of individuals. It needs that foundation to lead naturally into an integrated system of constant re-enforcement through the culture of the working environment and the aviation community generally. Cultures are living things that are constantly evolving, and they can regress as well as progress so need continuous support and development. The government department responsible for aviation must take the lead and the responsibility for seeing that the real world reflects this.”

Cadet Programs

A member has asked we clarify that the snapshot or comparison table of cadet programs included in the body of our October submission (on page 4) makes clear that:

“... a cadet entering the Jetstar Cadet Programme at the ab-initio level must undertake not only the ab-initio level course but the advanced course as well – thus incurring both costs.”

This means that the full cost of a Jetstar cadetship is \$202,160.50. This appears to be a high price to require young aspiring pilots to pay, particularly when there is no guarantee of a job at the end.

The Federation is not opposed to cadet programs. In our written submission we stated that cadetship schemes have their place but are one avenue only.

Conclusion

Pilot training and airline safety need to be considered holistically. We commend the Senate on holding this important Inquiry and support regular parliamentary examination of our industry.

Further information

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