

**Rural And Regional Affairs And Transport**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Additional Estimates 2021 - 2022**

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications**

**Committee Question Number: 20**

**Departmental Question Number: SQ22-000026**

**Division/Agency Name: Civil Aviation Safety Authority**

**Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No.98 (14 February 2022)**

**Topic: CASA - Knowledge of REX engineer investigation**

**Senator Malarndirri McCarthy asked:**

Senator McCARTHY: The Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association has raised the issue of another Rex engineer who has been treated in a way that is contrary to the principles of just culture. I'm talking about an engineer who was subject to disciplinary action after the aircraft he was taxiing clipped a bin. The engineering investigation found that the line markings on the tarmac for taxiing were in the wrong place and had been incorrectly marked, and no fault was attributed to the engineer. The Rex general manager, however, ordered an investigation be conducted by human resources and determined that the engineer was professionally negligent. Has this been reported to CASA and are you aware of this?

Ms Spence: I'm not aware of it. I will have to take on notice whether it was reported to CASA.

Senator McCARTHY: I do understand that the association has reported it.

Ms Spence: I'm just not aware of it, I'm sorry.

**Answer:**

On 27 May 2019, the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA) informed the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Chief Executive Officer/Director of Aviation Safety, Mr Shane Carmody, by email of concerns relating to Regional Express (Rex) Approved Maintenance Organisation (AMO). These complaints related to the Safety Management System (SMS), the discouraging of reporting maintenance errors or defects, and Just Culture.

Included in this letter were incidents relating to a single engineer, including the taxi incident.

CASA contacted Rex about the allegations and conducted two surveillance events in July and October 2019 at the Rex's Wagga Wagga maintenance facility, and Rex's Sydney Head Office, with a focus on safety culture and the reporting of defects and maintenance errors by engineers.

The intent of both audits was to establish whether the alleged safety-related risks identified in the ALAEA letter had any foundation, ascertain what follow up of the events had been carried out, the operational effectiveness of the Just Culture within the Rex AMO, and for CASA to be satisfied with the level of operational aviation safety in the Rex operation.

As reflected in its Regulatory Philosophy, CASA defines 'Just Culture' as follows.

*CASA embraces, and encourages the development throughout the aviation community of, a 'just culture' as an organisational culture in which people are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them that are commensurate with their experience, qualifications and training, but where gross negligence, recklessness, wilful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated.*

Interviews were held with four engineers. Some were selected at random from a shift roster during the Wagga Wagga visit on 4 July and some volunteered for an interview following the Sydney visit of 28 August. From the interviews conducted the engineer cohort were seen to have an understanding of Just Culture in the organisational and individual context.

As a result of the two surveillance activities, the audit team were satisfied that the Rex SMS was operating and effective in the areas examined. The Accountable Executive and the senior management team were aware of the safety risks faced by the organisation. SMS principles, including Just Culture, were found to be implemented throughout the organisation.

The evidence produced or discovered during the 2019 audits did not result in any Safety Findings or Safety Observations.