

## Rural And Regional Affairs And Transport

### QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### Additional Estimates 2021 - 2022

#### Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

**Committee Question Number: 43**

**Departmental Question Number: SQ22-000052**

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

**Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No.100 (14 February 2022)**

**Topic: CASA - Single engine aircraft capability in Adelaide**

#### **Senator Rex Patrick asked:**

Senator PATRICK: Thank you. I want to go to an answer that was provided to me last time around—committee question No. 66 [...]

Senator PATRICK: It was about search and rescue helicopters. I'm sorry, I didn't quite understand this answer, but it's a good starting point to work from so let's go from there. I guess I was trying to look at the aircraft that I see flying around Adelaide quite regularly, which is the Agusta Bell 412, I believe, a single engine search and rescue aircraft. You've said that there's a new regulation that commenced on 2 December. It is not clear to me, in the way in which you have written this up, because you basically say you take a risk-based approach to operations and I don't know enough detail about how that risk is assessed. As a result of that part 138 being updated is there any change in the operations of those particular helicopters in Adelaide? Are there any things they can't do now that they could do before, or that they can do now that they couldn't do before?

Mr Monahan: In a more general sense, I think the last time we spoke the question was about a single engine versus a two engine and the redundancy that goes with that. You can make up for some of the lack of a second engine to provide that ability to maintain, in particular in something as risky as a search and rescue where you're hovering close in unusual locations—so having that redundancy of a second. There are other things you can put in with it, sometimes an autopilot or a secondary fuel system or secondary flight control systems that go to some of those discussions. But it would be very dependent on the airframe you have and what type of aircraft. If it's a piston versus a turbine—turbines are a little more reliable and considered to have some advantage. As we spoke last time, if we can get the specificity I'm glad to give you a breakdown of what that aircraft might be able to do to help the cause.

Senator PATRICK: I'm going to a specific aircraft and a specific change in regulation. Is the company that now operates these search and rescue aircrafts constrained in any way as a result of the changes?

Mr Monahan: I would have to look and work with the oversight side to see what they want to do with it to see if that's restrictive to what they've asked, or if there's something they want to do with those aircraft that falls outside of that. It depends on what they're asking. It

sounds like what you've described is that they feel they may not been able to do something they used to do in the past, but I'm not sure what that might be right now.

Senator PATRICK: Okay, because that's the dominant rescue service that I see. I guess there's SAPOL as well which has some rescue capabilities. [...]

Mr Monahan: It's certainly not our intent to try to hamper anybody from doing as much as they can with any aircraft they possess. Again, depending on what they're currently doing and what they want to do in the future, or if they feel, of the things they've been doing under Part 138, that they're no longer able to do one portion of that, we're absolutely happy to have a discussion with them to try to figure out what it is and see if we can get them to be able to do as much as they can with it. [...]

Senator PATRICK: They may have had to make a change, but they can do everything they could do before. [...]

Mr Monahan: The aircraft you're talking about is a rescue Bell 412. [...]

Senator PATRICK: I think most of those Westpac helicopters are twin engine, aren't they?

Mr Monahan: Correct. I'll look at what that single-engine type aircraft, the 412, possibly could have done in the past and if there are any substantive changes currently.

Senator PATRICK: It would be the case that, when this change came out, they would have to look at their flight manuals and operation manuals, I would presume. So perhaps the best way would be for you to contact them.

Mr Monahan: That would be great. That would help us define—to give you a more fulsome answer.

Senator PATRICK: I'm asking perhaps if you might have a look. They're a commercial entity.

Mr Monahan: Sure.

Senator PATRICK: I'm looking at this from the outside. They haven't contacted me. Others in industry have raised a concern about it. I think you're in the best position to be able to look at that, and I'd be grateful if you could.

Mr Monahan: Absolutely. We'll reach out to the operator and get to the heart of it. One of the other options that's always available while we have the regulation, is the ability to discuss what they want to do and if there are other ways to accept all needs for compliance to offset the risk, or perhaps do something slightly different that will suit their needs. There's always that option available.

Senator PATRICK: If there is no change, then you don't have to have the discussion [...]

**Answer:**

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has contacted the helicopter operator who provides Search and Rescue (SAR) services in South Australia, and they have confirmed there are no changes to the company's operations under the new Flight Operations Regulations, which came into effect on 2 December 2021. The operator advised CASA that it decided to replace its EC-130 with a two-engine aircraft prior to the transition to the new Flight Operations Regulations. The operator does not possess any single engine helicopters in its fleet and has not experienced any impacts on their operational capability.

CASA is not aware of any other South Australian search and rescue and emergency and medical service operators that use single engine helicopters.

The Motor Accident Commission (MAC) of South Australia was previously a sponsor with naming rights on the State Helicopter Service Contract. This sponsorship enabled MAC to request the operator to paint their aircraft in MAC's colours (red and white). This particular contract is no longer in place and CASA is not aware of any other MAC arrangements. For context, MAC is not an Air Operator's Certificate holder or an aircraft operator but a sponsor of the operator who does provide that service.