

Good Morning

This is further to my phone conversation with the Committee's secretary.

Two categories of objection were received to a comment in Submission #14 - that a certain imported safety model was "nonsense". The statement would have been less objectionable had (a) it not mentioned a name associated with the model, and (b) provided argument as to why I held that particular view of the model.

The first category of objection was formal, with one individual resigning from the Aviation Safety Foundation Australasia (ASFA) in protest. As a result, I drafted the attached paper absolving my colleague of responsibility for authorship. The comment had been entered independently of Dr Dell during my final "polishing" of our joint submission. (I have obscured the objector's name in the attachment, in the hope that further aggravation can be avoided.)

Two individuals on the PPrune blog also took exception to the comment. One of them thought we co-authors were loonies and that seemed to settle their discussion.

The overseas expert named has been advised. His reaction was tolerant and good humoured.

The attached statement was drafted for Geoff Dell's use should my indiscretion cause him any further difficulties. I trust it sufficiently conveys my contrition and acceptance of a silly error, and that I might extend the same apology to the Committee and its staff for any consequent difficulty.

Having said that, the original statement precisely reflects the prevailing sentiment at a table I sat at, that was filled with seasoned and respected General Aviation pilots, after a CASA-sponsored breakfast meeting, in Brisbane, which had been addressed by the named overseas expert (and one other). It was not the fault of the presenter, but of an institutional tendency to "push" systems and models that have little or no practical application amongst those of us at the base of the aviation pyramid. The associated safety problem is that it is within this "lowest tier" of the aviation environment that attributes are developed, that are then carried, through career, into airlines and other higher levels of the industry.

Reflecting on the core theme of our submission - the need for an independent aviation safety analysis capacity - in the time since we submitted, that dream has taken a step closer to reality, with one Australian university expressing interest in action on the concept.

Finally, I expect the Committee by now has a feel for pilots' occasional recourse to hyperbole in communication. I was certainly guilty of that. It's a language we easily slip into. Apologies, again.

Yours Sincerely

Doug Edwards

To whom it may concern:

As author of the comment that [redacted] has taken such grave exception to, I need to tender an apology. I deeply regret being the cause of [redacted]'s distress. Noting that the objectionable passage is contained within one half of one sentence of a submission comprising many hundreds of sentences, I nonetheless wish to put it into context.

Firstly, though, I should stress that the insertion of the passage in question took place after my co-author had cleared the "final" draft. It was all my own work, spur of the moment, and not in the least attributable to Dr Geoff Dell.

The context is that we wished, in our submission, to highlight the need for an independent R&D and training facility to support safety in general and CASA in particular. In the final stage before submission I allowed a personal bias to creep in – distaste for cultural cringe, the habit of deferring to overseas expertise – as supporting the case for creating the capacity for indigenous safety and safety system development.

I picked the "Bow Tie" system to criticise to illustrate the need. It's from abroad, and I'd recently heard it touted as a prevention mechanism, and couldn't see it doing that. It's a complex analytic tool, very good for investigations, but it does not, in my view, translate into a decision aid. The time between circumstances that might lead to an accident becoming apparent – and the accident (or successful prevention action) – will be measured in minutes or seconds. It's the real-time *Situation-Awareness-Decision* cycle, no doubt under stress, not the days and weeks of investigation.

Reading Australian GA accident reports one notes the need. We should be able to offer pilots a range of decision assistance (and performance under stress) paradigms. And we ought to be able to develop such models locally.

In hindsight, what I had to say was thoughtless and stupid. That was especially so insofar as accompanying rationale and context were not supplied. Even so, it would have been better left unsaid. Aside from giving offence it's seriously distracted some readers from the thrust of the paper. In those cases, instead of bolstering the argument, it weakened it.

By way of mitigation, the final drafting took place late in the evening before departure next morning on travel. The writing task had presented little lead-time, and only small chunks of time were available to apply. At the eleventh hour, I got careless and chose to throw in some rhetorical colour – and picked entirely the wrong thing to say.

I sincerely regret this episode of careless expression. However, I think it should be kept in proportion. It is a submission from private individuals. It's really not capable of being interpreted as representing ASFA. Other readers have seen our paper as a welcome and responsible case for specific and necessary safety advances. It's important that – at this critical time for aviation in Australia – the aim remain on the safety issues and the long term potential for benefits to our industry.

I shall, of course, write along similar lines to the Senate Committee to ask them to disregard the objectionable passage and to accept my apology for careless writing.

15 July 2008

Geoff Edwards
042 520 929



"O.K., so I shrank. But you must admit I am brighter."