

Chairman's Report May 2018

I recently had the pleasure of joining a group of Antique Aeroplane Association of Australia pilots on a “pilgrimage” flight to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the first Flying Doctor mission. Over 9 days in May, we flew in stages from Dubbo (NSW) to Cloncurry (QLD) and then 18 aircraft re-enacted the flight of 17 May 1928, from Cloncurry to Julia Creek, to take a doctor to treat an injured stockman at a local clinic. This was the culmination of an idea of Rev. John Flynn of the Australian Inland Mission to provide medical services to people in remote communities, using an aircraft provided by the Queensland And Northern Territory Aerial Service (Q.A.N.T.A.S) which later became the Flying Doctor Service – gaining Royal patronage in 1954 and now known as the RFDS. After Julia Creek we flew on to Mount Isa for a reception at the RFDS Western Queensland Base, from where we made our own ways home in the following days.

Interestingly, this happened in much the same time-scale as the formation in the UK of the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in 1929 and its admission as a London Livery Company, with HRH Prince Philip as Grand Master, in 1956.

The two organisations share similar ideals, and the support of the Antiquers ensured TV coverage to raise public awareness of the role of RFDS. We were accompanied by an RFDS B200 King Air flown by a young pilot who has been associated with our Honourable Company, and I was able to raise the profile of our company with the other participants – I hope that we may gain some new members as a result. The project is a credit to the Antique Aeroplane Association, the participants and the RFDS. For me that involved 30 hours of flying, across more than 2500 NM, with 15 landings at locations from major regional airports to pastoral station strips. The people we met – aviators, RFDS personnel, local community leaders, politicians and media – displayed great hospitality and support that reflects the true spirit of the Outback and the fellowship of pilots.

This year, we made a change to our rules to ensure that our membership numbers were finalised on good time to avoid paying fees to London - “capitation fees” that go towards the costs of running an international organisation – for people who are no longer members. In past years, we have not closed off our books on non-financial members until August/September, and this has often led to their resignations not being able to be notified until too late for the following year's capitation bill which is calculated each September. Consequently, we now have voted to consider a member to have resigned if their subscriptions are more than 7 months in arrears (at the end of April). This year, thanks to our hard-working Secretary, Pete Norford, and some follow-ups from other Executive Council members, we have managed to contact just about everyone and in many cases we discovered that our reminder messages, sent by E-mail from January onwards, did not always get received. In some cases we were sending information to inactive, but not necessarily closed, addresses/accounts – whilst in others, people had moved on and we were unaware of their new contact details.

Please, if you change your contact details, let Pete know (secretary@airpilots.org.au or admin@airpilots.org.au will find him) – and if a fellow-member moves and you discover they have not heard from us lately, please remind them to update their details with us. We do cross-check against the UK membership database, but if you tell us of any changes we will let the London office know, and vice-versa, though it may take a while if you update your details on line via the UK web site without also putting Pete in the picture.

Early in May, Executive Council members Paul Tyrrell, Simon Ewart and I made a flying visit to Perth, to gain support for increasing our membership in Western Australia. We held an information session at the Royal Aero Club of Western Australia, and showed an audio-visual presentation developed by one of our Adelaide-based Young Air Pilots members, Keith Wright. We are hopeful that, with follow-up action, this will restore an active Working Group in the Western Third of our Continent and bring our numbers there up to a more respectable figure than we currently have. Out thanks to the staff of the RACWA and the local core of members, plus some friends who have offered to continue to raise our profile in the West.

While we have identified a potential WA Working Group chair, we are yet to find a replacement for Matthew Harriott in Victoria following his career progression to fly the B777 for Virgin Australia, and someone in New South Wales to co-ordinate the activities that Immediate Past Chairman, Captain Sandy Howard, has looked after for so many years (and is now seeking a younger replacement).

May is also the time of year when our nominations for the Trophies and Awards for 2018 are sent off to the international T&A Committee in London. There are many awards open for people who have made a significant contribution to our collective objectives of airmanship, safety and mentoring, as well as three awards for Australians: the Australian Bi-Centennial Award, the Grand Master's Australian Medal and the Master's Award for Australia. The recipients will be announced in September, and the awards presented at a formal Banquet in London in late October, or during the Master's Annual Visit to Australia in November.

This year, the Master is Captain Colin Cox, who is a former Chairman of the Hong Kong Region and lived in the Frangrant Harbour City for many years whilst working for Cathay Pacific. Though now based on the UK again, he remains a champion of the Regions. We are currently planning his itinerary, between 8 and 25 November, and as always it will be busy but the aim is for him to meet as many Australian members as possible as well as meeting with significant industry figures on our behalf, including regulatory and political leaders in Canberra. We hope you will try to attend the function in your State or Territory.

May is also the time when our scholarship applications close, and we begin to assess the applications to determine who will be our winners. This year, as well as the scholarships offered in our name by industry sponsors and partners, we will be awarding a scholarship in our own name and funded by you, the members. Four years ago we resolved to set up a Members' Scholarship Fund in Australia, which has grown into the Education Trust Fund.

We thank those members who have made individual contributions to this Trust, whose generosity has allowed us to make this commitment for 2018. In these days of low interest rates, we believe there is value in crowd-funding a scholarship each year from among our members and friends so that we can see the immediate value of our giving, rather than putting all our efforts into building an investment fund for a long time into the future. Both strategies are being followed by the Trustees (Rob Dicker, Sandy Howard and John Eacott) to both provide a scholarship today and for the future.

Whilst not currently tax-deductible (and many of us are not in a tax-deductible income regime), the Trustees are investigating whether there is a way to make these donations deductible for those to whom this confers a bonus, over and above the rewards of contributing to an endowment for future generations of pilots. Charity and philanthropy are the third pillar of the Honourable Company alongside professional skill development, and fellowship among pilots and other flight crew of all kinds of aircraft, at all licence levels and reasons for flying.

I will shortly be spending some time with family in the UK, and plan to meet up with UK-based members of the Honourable Company. They run a Flying Club with a couple of functions each month through the northern summer, and also I may meet some Australian members who are travelling for significant airshows in the UK during July – RIAT at Fairford, Flying Legends at Duxford, and Farnborough come to mind. The Honourable Company also runs a program of occasional visits to industry and Australian members can often join in with these – details are on the UK web site www.airpilots.org under the Members' pages, as well as the Newsletter that is E-mailed to all of us from time to time. These are great ways to learn more about our organisations and find a friendly guide in the UK aviation scene.

I wish you all good health and safe times in all your endeavours - if you are travelling, be safe.

Mike Cleaver (Chairman)