



High Award For SA Flying Ace

South Australian flying ace Chris Sperou received an honour of the highest kind in October when he was presented with the prestigious Australian Bi-Centennial Award from the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in the UK.

The award, which recognises an outstanding individual contribution to Australian aviation, couldn't be more fitting for Chris who is Australia's most outstanding aerobatic pilot and has been an air show favourite for 40 years.

Besides holding 13 Australian National Aerobatic Champion titles and being a seven-time member of the champion aerobatics formation team, Chris has flown 35 different types of aircraft, performed from Russia to America, and been the stunt pilot for several movies. Chris was awarded for his ongoing contribution to the art of sport aerobatic flying at a gala banquet held at London's medieval Guildhall. The event was attended by 700 leading air crew members involved in military, commercial and civil aviation.

Among those in attendance was Grand Master of the Guild, HRH The Duke of York, Prince Andrew – who flew helicopters as a decoy for Exocet missiles fired at British forces by Argentine troops during the 1982 Falklands War – and Captain Jim Lovell, Commander of the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission to the moon, who uttered those famous words “Houston we have a problem”. Lovell skilfully brought his crippled Apollo 13 spacecraft and crew safely back to Earth following an in-space explosion. While 400,000 kilometres from Earth, en route to the moon.

Chris was the first Australian pilot to be granted permission to fly aerobatics down to ground level and the first to fly the spectacular ‘inverted ribbon cut’ which he executes, inverted, just 25 feet above ground level. One of his most memorable flying experiences was reaching a speed

of 750 kilometres an hour in a low-level dive, in an historic, propeller-driven Sea Fury, while demonstrating the aeroplane above the Adelaide Grand Prix.

On another occasion, during an aerobatic performance above Darwin Harbour, a rudder cable snapped on Chris' Pitts Special aircraft. When he was about to bail out Chris remembered that the waters below were home to large crocodiles and deadly box jellyfish. At this point he may have well muttered “Darwin we have a problem!” But Chris immediately wrapped the broken cable around one hand and then awkwardly, but successfully, landed the stricken aircraft at Darwin airport. This extraordinary feat of airmanship and courage only goes to show why Chris has been recognised on the international stage.



Chris has operated a successful loss adjusting firm in Adelaide for the past 40 years. In his professional capacity he has provided great support and expertise to QBE (through AAUP/AAIG previously) and the general aviation industry in SA, WA and NT.

QBE congratulates Chris on this deserved recognition on the world stage for excellence and service to aviation and thanks him for his service and friendship over this lengthy period of time.

Well done Chris from your friends at QBE.

For further information, please contact Julian Fraser, National Relationship Manager - Aviation (03) 8602 9904.



Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Overseeing Safety— Sport Aviation

Sport aviation, a term which encompasses a variety of light aviation from fixed wing to flex wing to gyros, gliders to ballooning, hang gliding, parachuting, warbirds and models, represents almost half of all aviation activity in Australia.

An Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) study (AR-2013-067) released in late October 2013, states that in the years 2003–2012, reporting of safety incidents in this sector grew tenfold, largely reflecting significant change in Australian recreational aviation. ‘More pilots, are taking up the opportunities offered by recreational aviation as opposed to using VH-registered aircraft’, the reports says, based on factors such as ‘aircraft purchase and operating cost, maintenance, access to training, and licensing requirements’. Sadly, this growth is reflected in a corresponding increase in sport aviation accidents and incidents, including 21 fatalities in 2013 (as at October 2013).

The greatest number of incidents involving recreational aviation in reports to the ATSB involved airspace incursions in controlled airspace, generally reported by air traffic control; with the remaining incidents involving restricted airspace in Western Australia; Edinburgh, South Australia; and Amberley, Queensland.

In 2013, CASA's sport aviation office, SASAO (or more accurately, the Self-Administering Sport Aviation Organisations' section), doubled its efforts to improve sport aviation's safety performance.

The sport aviation team is now a regular sight at the many recreational aviation fly-ins around the country, such as the annual Easter NatFly; the September 2013 AusFly at Narromine; as well as the many smaller gatherings of sport aviation enthusiasts held regularly. At these events, the sport

aviation team works with the various sport organisations to raise awareness of safety issues such as aircraft airworthiness, being appropriately qualified and certified, and well prepared for a flight by checking weather and notams (notices to airmen).

Kevin Scrimshaw, CASA safety assurance officer in the sport aviation office, says ‘when we first started doing ramp checks at these events, we were treated with scepticism, but now we have a lot of support. It's turning people's thinking around, and they see ramp checks for what they are: a way of educating pilots, of giving us assurance that you're meeting safety requirements. If you deliberately break the rules, we'll enforce them. If pilots are doing the right thing, then it won't be an issue.

Ramp checks are an important element of every aviation regulator's surveillance functions, and the multi-disciplinary sport aviation team also takes the opportunity of these gatherings to give presentations, and have talked to pilot groups on topics such as ‘Demystifying ramp checks’ and the range of safety resources CASA produces for pilots and engineers, such as Out-n-Back, OnTrack and the flight planning kit, and to talk one-on-one with sport aviation participants.

Where pilots who have been ramp checked are members of one of the sport aviation organisations such as Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus); the Australian Sports Rotorcraft Association (ASRA), or the Hanggliding Federation of Australia (HGFA), CASA provides a synopsis to the respective organisation, in the interests of highlighting such issues and communicating them to their members. ‘While, for example, Scrimshaw explains, ‘the majority of pilots who have been ramp checked have been carrying electronic flight bags (EFBs) and also carrying charts as a redundancy if their EFB fails, some pilots are still not adequately prepared, either carrying no charts, or ones that are out of date.’

SASAO is also taking a holistic approach to sport aviation safety, encouraging the uptake of safety management systems in the various sport aviation organisations in anticipation of the requirements expected to be reflected in CASR Part 149.

