

The Way Forward

1994 - 2010: Severing a 16 year association

At our last AGM, the overwhelming sentiment from those present was that the Hang Gliding Federation of Australia (HGFA) as an organisation seemed to be becoming markedly trike unfriendly. Further, they have reintroduced the iniquitous State Levy which takes a portion of our membership fees and pays it directly to HGAWA, a body of which we are not members. None of us have ever been members of HGAWA and none of us has any wish to become members. HGAWA has never given our club one cent in all the years we have been paying the so-called State Levy and yet HGFA continues to pay part of our HGFA membership fees directly to that body. (I personally believe it's illegal for them to do so.)

In view of this and other issues, it was the feeling of the meeting that we should seriously investigate changing to Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) as our governing body. Since then, we have undertaken discussions and investigations regarding the best way forward for our school, our students and all club members.

Neither Brendan nor Paul wishes to leave any of our current club members stranded in one organisation if we move to another organisation but a decision had to be made and that decision has been made in consultation with many members of the club. From this point forward, Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) will be the

prime organisation for South-West Microlights. So, after an association spanning 16 years, South-West Microlight School is in the final stages of the process of severing all ties with the HGFA and transferring all future operations to RA-Aus. The decision to make this change was not a particularly easy one and was taken after due consideration, deliberation and soul-searching.

Ultimately, the decision was determined by which organisation is a better fit for powered aircraft like ours which operate mostly from airports and aircraft owners who have no interest in the soaring sports or in being valued only as tug pilots for hang gliders operating out of bush paddocks, as well as what is best for us as operators of the school. Our investigations have convinced us that the best interests of the school and future students will be served by the change to RA-Aus and we believe it is also in the best interests of all club members.

So, South-West Microlights is now a recognised and accredited Flight Training Facility operating under Recreational Aviation Australia (RA-Aus) but both Brendan and Paul will remain members of HGFA until our current membership runs out. After that time, we will operate exclusively under RA-Aus as it's too expensive to maintain

membership in both organisations.

There are some initial costs and formalities for you, as individual trike owners, to change your pilot membership and trike registration to RA-Aus but, after the initial process has been completed, you will find RA-Aus is a less costly, more efficient and easier to deal with organisation and a far better fit for the aircraft we fly.

One of the unexpected, initial costs is having a Level 2 Maintenance Authority perform a thorough inspection of your trike and sign a Condition Report before it can be transferred. At the next AGM, it is my intention to move that the club covers a proportion of this cost for current club members, which I think is only fair and will ease the burden a little bit.

If you haven't already done so, contact Paul for a step-by-step guide to the actual process of transferring membership, having current qualifications and endorsements recognised and transferring trike registration to RA-Aus. ■



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