Military Airworthiness Regulation is the new Black

Over 600 aviation airworthiness delegates representing over 25 countries around the globe gathered at what is considered to be the largest conference of its kind in the history of aviation safety.

The Defence Aviation Safety Authority (DASA) from Australia hosted the two day conference in Melbourne, Australia with the aim of bringing together the global aviation airworthiness community to promote the many advantages of a global airworthiness convention.

DASA transitioned all Australian Defence aviation, and over 70% of Australian industry partners, across to their new Defence Aviation Safety Regulations (DASR) on the 30th September. The DASR are the next evolution of our airworthiness regulations and are consistent with Defence’s two decade drive for excellence in aviation safety.

The DASR are based upon the European Military Airworthiness Regulations (EMAR), which are 95% identical to the EASA regulation, and represent an emerging global convention in airworthiness.

Keynote speaker, AVM Catherine Roberts, headed a distinguished list of international and domestic thought leaders in aviation airworthiness and challenged the delegates to make a choice to be an active participant in this global Military Aviation Community, and be part of the team so together the airworthiness community can achieve the benefits of International Military Airworthiness Regulation.

Areas of discussion throughout the conference included:

- The problems faced by both Military Aviation Authorities (MAA) and commercial organisations when considering the move to a global convention;
- The benefits of adopting a global convention; and
- The implementation process - looking at the differing journeys of many countries around the world.

Group Captain Peter Griffin, Chief Engineer and Technical Airworthiness Authority for the NZDF, continued the ANZAC tradition with his team collaborating with DASA staff for some time. He spoke candidly about their journey and the challenges facing them.

“A bespoke system can make mutual recognition more difficult and time consuming. A global convention provides easier understanding of the way other militaries, which have signed up, manage airworthiness and the interoperability that flows from this. There is a potential for saving and sharing resources and potential for enhanced commercial relationships,” GPCAPT Griffin shared.

And it is not only defence organisations that have been challenged by regulations. Boeing Defence Australia Chief Engineer, Mr Stephen Hudson discussed some of the
challenges presented by a bespoke regulation set such as Australia’s TAREGs. Having country, and then military, unique regulations created artificial boundaries for truly global companies such as Boeing. Defence Industry agreed that moving to a global convention offers a promise of efficiencies.

“One tangible outcome of the change is a more integrated Boeing company – internationally where Boeing Defence Australia will be able to draw on the Boeing Company’s expertise and resources, without the artificial boundaries imposed by the TAMM,” said Mr Hudson.

Juan Montero, Chief Engineer from Airbus Military Spain, agrees. “The KC30 MRTT Continued Airworthiness Forum permits sharing information and expediting the issuance of approved instructions for Continued Airworthiness. This saves a lot of effort and schedule for Airbus DS and our customers,” he stated.

This highlights the shift in Australia’s acquisition and sustainment strategy. Our TAREGs served us very well for many years. In our continual search for excellence they were updated and amended to reflect the current thinking of the day. But we are no longer just an island in the Pacific. We are part of a global aviation community and our regulations needed to change with this shift to keep Australia relevant, but more importantly, safe!

“We are a global Air Force. We operate all around the world and these regulations, (DASR), give us the flexibility to operate more effectively globally,” acknowledged Commander Air Force Training Group, Air Commodore Geoff Harland.

Australia is joined by many other countries in adopting this approach to acquisition and sustainment.

“There is a definite need for clear harmonised requirements during multinational procurement, delivery, operations and sustainment. A global military airworthiness convention establishes new culture of mutual trust and transparency where nations still maintain their sovereignty. Recognition will become the business card for each nation. In a century of budget constraints and limited people, a consistent global aviation military regulation convention is not an option, it is a must,” stressed Major General Dr. Ansgar Rieks, Director General Military Aviation Authority, Germany.

Agreeing that the military airworthiness community can benefit from a global convention is one thing, to implement is yet another. In an environment of trust and collaboration, many countries shared their trials and triumphs experienced during the implementation of a global convention.

Many delegates, particularly the European representatives, were especially interested in how Australia had implemented DASR in just 9 months. While some countries adopted a narrow yet deep approach, transitioning platform by platform, Australia has adopted a wide yet shallow approach incorporating two phases.

Phase 1 was low risk and low benefit with the aim to migrate organisations to DASR with minimal impact to existing management constructs, contracts and organisational structures. Having a well defined, yet limited scope allowed simple deconfliction with
other change initiatives across Defence. It offered a controlled transition in which the community could be fully educated on DASR, while protecting the arrangements that have assured safety under the TAREGs. It also ensured that the cost of implementation in both human and financial terms was minimised.

Phase 2 will be low risk with high benefit. Having preserved the level of current safety offered by existing arrangements, and achieved initial compliance to the new DASR, organisations can explore and exploit the flexibility and efficiencies offered by DASR in a manner and rate that is sensible to their unique circumstances.

Of special interest to them, was our integration of Operation and Technical regulation to create the Military Air Operator (MAO) construct. Australia is the thought leader in this area being the first country to adopt this significant approach.

As an MAO, responsible for ensuring the safety of 30% of Air Force’s flying hours, AIRCDRE Harland believes this a good thing saying that “DASR brings us to a point where technical organisations and operational organisations work more closely together, which is a great benefit to me. DASR integrate technical and operational regulation and establish clear accountabilities for commanders providing a single point of accountability for continuing airworthiness and flight operations.”

With so many global airworthiness leaders sharing their experiences it highlighted that there is no one right way for this journey towards a global airworthiness convention. Despite the differences, multiple countries expressed a common theme uniting the military airworthiness community, pushing all boundaries whether cultural or political aside, and that is ‘Capability First, Safety Always’.