



Media Release: 3 September, 2014.

CASA's CAMPAIGN AGAINST CVD PILOTS

In a formal Submission to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development Warren Truss, the Virgin Independent Pilots Association (VIPA) claims the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has mounted a coordinated and vigorous campaign to discriminate against pilots who have colour vision deficiency (CVD).

Members of the VIPA Executive, along with the President of the Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA), will meet with Minister Truss today to highlight how, despite assurances from CASA, changes to CVD practices have been introduced without full industry consultation.

“VIPA will tell Minister Truss that CASA’s claims relating to safety-related implications of CVD pilots abilities are palpably false, as no such evidence actually exists,” VIPA Executive Director, Simon O’Hara, explained.

“After a review of the Civil Authority Safety Regulation Part 67, CASA has unfairly ruled that Class 1 pilots with CVD will have to inform their employers about their CVD and also “may” be forced to undergo a colour assessment and diagnostic test (CAD) in the future.

“Under the regulations, three levels of CVD testing are available, with the third level test providing an opportunity for CVD pilots to gain an unrestricted medical certificate if they pass a test which simulates an operational situation.

“CASA are now dubiously using the CAD test for the purposes of this third level of testing. It is purely a clinical CVD test which does not simulate any operational situation encountered in an aircraft.

“Previously, CASA have accepted passes in practical flight and simulator testing as sufficient evidence that CVD pilots can safely carry out their flying duties.

“As a result of this past practice, several thousand CVD pilots have progressed their careers to the highest levels possible in aviation since the early 1990’s, with unblemished safety records.

“Now, any new pilots who fail the three levels of colour vision testing will be issued with a medical certificate which is valid for daytime operations in good weather only.

“We are all extremely concerned that these pilots are now unlikely to continue in a career in aviation and will simply walk away from the industry altogether.”

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According to VIPA, CASA's actions disregard 25 years' of demonstrated safety cases and have been triggered by an appeal lodged in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) by CVD regional airline pilot John O'Brien, against a refusal by CASA to permit him to become a Captain.

"VIPA and its members, along with other industry groups, have lost confidence in the aviation medicine (AvMed) section of CASA," Mr O'Hara said.

"Several recent AAT cases are littered with examples of the dubious decision making of the CASA AvMed section and criticise it's Principal Medical Officer for making decisions which are inconsistent, ill-supported and ill-reasoned.

"Pilots are often left with no choice except to appeal these bureaucratic decisions through the AAT and in doing so, they are often financially crippled attempting to balance the uneven process against a regulator with unlimited access to tax payer funded resources.

"CVD pilots are just the latest group to be targeted by the PMO and their plight highlights the reason why VIPA and many in the industry are calling for an urgent overhaul of the AvMed section of CASA.

Mr O'Hara will be joined by the Australian and International Pilots Association (AIPA) President, Nathan Safe, along with Senator David Fawcett, Mr O'Brien and Dr Arthur Pape, an authority in CVD, at today's meeting with Minister Truss in Parliament House.

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