



Media Release: Monday 9 December, 2013.

PILOTS' CAREERS PUT AT RISK BY COURT APPEAL

The Virgin Independent Pilots Association (VIPA) says hundreds of highly experienced Australian pilots could see their careers destroyed if the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) proceeds with its “de-facto” appeal against decisions handed down by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) in 1987 and 1989 which opened doors to airline careers for pilots who are colour vision defective (CVD).

VIPA Executive Director, Simon O'Hara, said today VIPA recognises that safety is always paramount in aviation. However, CVD pilots have passed check and line training requirements and shown the same demonstrated performance with no discernable differences. In addition in all instances where colour is used in aviation displays, colour is neither sufficient nor necessary to obtain the information a pilot needs and is in fact, redundant.

An appeal has recently been lodged in the AAT by a colour vision defective (CVD) pilot against a refusal by CASA to permit him to become a Captain in his airline based on his performance on a control tower signal gun test - a device which has no relevance in modern aviation practice.

Mr O'Hara, said CASA had used this pilot's case to launch what amounts to a “de facto” appeal against the earlier AAT decisions which have allowed many hundreds of CVD pilots to fly with no restrictions at all levels of the aviation industry.

He explained that many pilots had additional and alternative requirements placed upon them, like for instance, needing to fly with a non CVD First Officer.

“VIPA maintains there is no record of any incident or accident in which impaired colour vision could be attributed a causal factor,” Mr O'Hara said.

“The performance of the many CVD pilots employed in the airline industry is indistinguishable from that of the pilots who have normal colour vision.

“VIPA believes there is little doubt that the current planned action by CASA and its de-facto appeal will, if CASA succeeds, impact on hundreds of competent and safe pilots across the industry, including those presently employed in all of Australia's major airlines.

“We have a number of VIPA members whose careers would be negatively and severely curtailed should CASA prevail in the AAT and that's why we see this case as significant for the Virgin Australia pilot group.”

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Mr O'Hara said VIPA was making representations on the pilot's behalf to Members of the Federal Parliament, including key independent, Senator Nick Xenophon and Liberal Senator David Fawcett.

"We thank these Senators for their interest in the case to date as it is of great importance to the many CVD pilots currently in airline employment as well as the wider aviation industry," Mr O'Hara added.

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