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Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority



SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION

Discussion Paper - Access to Class C and Class D controlled airspace for sport and recreation aircraft

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Overview

We sought industry feedback from 27 October to 17 November 2023 on Discussion Paper (DP) 'Access to Class C and Class D controlled airspace for sport and recreation aircraft' examining the current regulatory requirements for access to Class C and Class D controlled airspace, and whether there are alternatives to achieve the objectives relating to safe, efficient, and equitable access. The DP proposed a review of the airspace arrangements which should be put in place for sport and recreation aircraft and which will operate under Part 103 of the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* (CASR).

The aviation community had told us that sport and recreation aviation's access to controlled airspace is too restricted. CASA committed to facilitate greater operational opportunities for sport and recreation aviation activities, when safe to do so, as outlined in the General Aviation Workplan.

Although the DP did not propose a specific policy approach or course of action, the feedback received will help clarify contemporary stakeholder views on this subject and assist us to consider the options for increasing sport and recreation opportunities as part of our General Aviation Workplan.

Currently, pilots operating in controlled airspace must meet standards in relation to:

- pilot competencies
- radio competencies and English language proficiency
- medical fitness
- aircraft equipment
- priorities for airspace access.

The DP examined each of these standards and requirements for users of controlled airspace and controlled aerodromes in Australia and the objectives underpinning the requirements, and asked if:

- the objectives are appropriate and reasonable
- the current requirements reflect the objectives
- if there are alternative ways we could achieve the objectives.

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our offices are located and their continuing connection to land, water and community, and pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Artwork: James Baban.

1 Reference material

1.1 Acronyms

The acronyms and abbreviations used in this SOC are listed in the table below.

Table 1. Acronyms

| Acronym | Description |
|---------|--|
| ADS-B | Automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast |
| AEL | Aviation English Language |
| AIP | Aeronautical Information Package |
| ASAO | Approved Self-Administering Organisation |
| ATC | Air Traffic Control |
| CAR | Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 |
| CASA | Civil Aviation Safety Authority |
| CASR | Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 |
| CPL | Commercial Pilot Licence |
| DAME | Designated aviation medical examiner |
| DP | Discussion paper |
| EC | Electronic conspicuity |
| GEL | General English Language |
| ICAO | International Civil Aviation Organisation |
| MOS | Manual of Standards |
| PPL | Private Pilot Licence |
| RPC | Recreational pilot certificate |
| RPL | Recreational Pilot Licence |
| SOC | Summary of consultation |

2 Respondents

We received 130 responses to the consultation. Respondents were able to select multiple identifier groups, for example both 'Pilot - Part 61' and 'Pilot - Sport and recreational', meaning that the following discussion of respondent identifier groups will exceed the 130 responses received. All responses were reviewed and analysed.

The majority of responses were from pilots authorised under the Part 61 licensing scheme or were from a sport and recreational organisation. Eighty-nine respondents (68%) identified as pilots authorised under the Part 61 licensing scheme, and 72 respondents (55%) identified as pilots authorised by a sport aviation body. Forty-seven respondents (36%) indicated that they are authorised under both the Part 61 licensing scheme and a sport aviation body.

Sixteen respondents (12%) identified as flight training operators, seven (5%) as air operators, seven (5%) as sport aviation bodies, and three (2%) as air traffic service providers.

Thirteen respondents (10%) identified as 'other', comprising five DAMEs, one CASA officer, one Chief Flying Instructor (RAAus), one flying instructor, one syndicate owner, one incorporated association, one professional pilot association, one 'myself' and one blank.

Two respondents (1.5%) did not select an identifier group.

Responses were received from organisations including, but not limited to:

- Airservices Australia
- AusALPA
- Australian Ballooning Federation¹
- Recreational Aviation Australia
- RV Aircraft Australia
- Sports Aviation Federation of Australia.

Eighty respondents (61%) gave permission for their response to be published.

CASA values the contributions made by all respondents. Where permission to publish has been granted by the respondent, individual consultation responses can be found at <https://consultation.casa.gov.au/regulatory-program/dp-2314os/>.

2.1 Key themes

Respondents were able to provide feedback to each question through a free-text field, in addition to selecting a response option, for example 'Yes', 'Yes, with changes', or 'No'. Some respondents provided identical or similar free-text comments for each question within a section.

Analysis of responses and free-text comments received to the consultation indicated:

- broad support for the underpinning objectives and current regulatory requirements for each topic discussed in the consultation
- support for the concept of expanding access to Class C and D airspace for sport and recreation pilots, so long as equivalent competencies and standards are met
- broad support for consistent requirements to be applied, where appropriate

¹ Note that the Australian Ballooning Federation ceased administering Private ballooning from 2 December 2023.

- support for the proposed Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme that was being consulted on separately.²

These key themes, and the other notable themes emerging from the consultation, will be discussed further below.

² The Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme was out of scope for this consultation; however feedback was noted.

3 Detailed analysis

3.1 Pilot competencies

3.1.1 Question 1: Are the objectives for pilot competency standards appropriate and reasonable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 98 | 75.38% |
| Yes, with changes | 20 | 15.38% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 9 | 6.92% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 2 | 1.54% |
| Not answered | 1 | 0.77% |

Thirty-two respondents (25%) also made comments to this question.

3.1.2 Question 2: Do the competency standards for CTR and CTA (in the Part 61 Manual of Standards) reflect the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 101 | 77.69% |
| Yes, with changes | 14 | 10.77% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 2 | 1.54% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 10 | 7.69% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Fifteen respondents (12%) also made comments to this question.

3.1.3 Question 3: Do you have any suggestions or alternative methods for achieving the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|---|-------|---------|
| Yes (please include your suggestions below) | 33 | 25.38% |
| No | 92 | 70.77% |
| Not answered | 5 | 3.85% |

Forty respondents (31%) also made comments to this question.

3.1.4 Themes

3.1.4.1 Suitability of objectives and current requirements

The vast majority of respondents indicated that the objectives of requiring pilot competency standards and the current competencies outlined in the Part 61 Manual of Standards (MOS) are suitable, as indicated by the high proportion of respondents who responded 'yes' or 'yes, with changes' to these questions. However, this does not necessarily mean that respondents support potential changes to how sport and recreation pilots and aircraft can operate in controlled environments.

Free-text comments also indicated that respondents were supportive of the current requirements. Five respondents suggested that all pilots should meet the required competencies, irrespective of the scheme the pilot is authorised under. Thirteen respondents further suggested that RAAus pilots should be able to operate in controlled airspace, so long as the competency standards are met.

Two respondents suggested that all pilots should be licensed under Part 61 of CASR to ensure competency standards are met.

3.1.4.2 Safety concerns

Several respondents also highlighted concerns about the competency standards for recreational pilots compared to Part 61 pilots, and the potential impact on safety which might result from permitting sport and recreation pilots access to controlled airspace. They highlighted a perceived gap in aircraft handling skills, adherence to assigned altitudes, and overall proficiency in maintaining safety within controlled airspace. Some respondents suggested that RAAus pilots who wish to gain an RPL require significant training to meet the Part 61 competency standards, and that some pilots do not recognise that such training can be required to reach the competency standards.

3.1.4.3 Tailored requirements for some types of sport and recreation aircraft

Five respondents also addressed the unique characteristics and limitations of specific aircraft, such as hot air balloons, paragliders, and hang gliders. They suggested relaxing certain criteria or introducing provisions tailored to operational requirements of these aircraft.

3.1.4.4 Other comments and suggested changes

Two respondents suggested that it is counterintuitive that RAAus pilots can receive training for the recreational pilot certificate (RPC) in controlled environments, but not exercise the privileges of the RPC in controlled environments.

Numerous respondents also made suggestions, including:

- Provide more educational material for controlled airspace procedures and radio calls, including material that is more representative of operations conducted by recreation aircraft.
- Allow either appropriately qualified RAAus Instructors to conduct training for CTR/CTA competencies, and/or allow Part 61 instructors to conduct flight reviews in RAAus registered certified aircraft.
- Allow ASAOs to provide training for CTR/CTA-equivalent endorsements.
- Allow only a Grade 1 or 2 Part 61 instructor, or Part 61 CPL holder with an RAAus Senior Instructor rating to give approval for RAAus pilots to operate in controlled airspace. Many RAAus instructors only hold a PPL, which does not include sufficient training and proficiency to provide approval for RAAus pilot certificate holders to operate in controlled airspace.
- Include a module for RPL to understand operations in controlled airspace and permit operations in Class D controlled airspace.

- Introduce a controlled airspace endorsement for PPL.

3.1.5 CASA response

CASA acknowledges the broad support for the current objectives for prescribing pilot competency standards, and those standards prescribed in the Part 61 MOS. CASA also notes the support for potentially allowing sport and recreation pilots to operate in controlled airspace, so long as the required competencies are met.

CASA acknowledges the safety concerns expressed by some respondents relating to the competency standards for sport and recreation pilots compared to Part 61 pilots, and the potential impact on safety permitting sport and recreation pilots access to controlled airspace.

CASA will engage with internal and external stakeholders to explore what pathways could be made available for sport and recreation pilots to gain the competencies and proficiency required to operate in controlled airspace. Any changes will focus on ensuring all pilots meet and maintain the same standards prescribed in the Part 61 MOS.

Regarding the comments relating to introducing a module for RPL to understand operations in controlled airspace, and to introduce a controlled airspace endorsement for PPL, these are already available in the Part 61 licensing scheme.

3.2 Radio competencies and English language proficiency

3.2.1 Question 1: Are the objectives for radio and English language competency standards appropriate and reasonable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 96 | 73.85% |
| Yes, with changes | 17 | 13.08% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 14 | 10.77% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 1 | 0.77% |
| Not answered | 2 | 1.54% |

Thirty-two respondents (25%) also made comments to this question.

3.2.2 Question 2: Do the competency standards for operating radio equipment (in the Part 61 Manual of Standards) reflect the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|-------------------|-------|---------|
| Yes | 110 | 84.62% |
| Yes, with changes | 8 | 6.15% |

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 4 | 3.08% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 3 | 2.31% |
| Not answered | 5 | 3.85% |

Thirteen respondents (10%) also made comments to this question.

3.2.3 Question 3: Do the competency standards for ‘AEL – Aviation English language proficiency’ (in the Part 61 MOS) reflect the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 98 | 75.38% |
| Yes, with changes | 12 | 9.23% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 11 | 8.46% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 6 | 4.62% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Twenty-six respondents (20%) also made comments to this question.

Question 4: Do you have any suggestions or alternative methods for achieving the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|---|-------|---------|
| Yes (please include your suggestions below) | 34 | 26.15% |
| No | 93 | 71.54% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Thirty-nine respondents (30%) also made comments to this question.

3.2.4 Themes

3.2.4.1 Suitability of objectives and current requirements

The vast majority of respondents indicated that the objectives of requiring radio and English language proficiency competency standards and the current competencies outlined in the Part 61 MOS are suitable, as indicated by the high proportion of respondents who responded 'Yes' or 'Yes, with changes' to these questions. However, this does not necessarily mean that respondents support potential changes to allow non-Part 61 licensed pilots of sport and recreation aircraft to operate in controlled environments.

Some free-text comments indicated that some respondents were supportive of the current requirements (or supportive with changes), while others did not support the current requirements and indicated that changes were required. Many of the free-text comments reflected concerns about the application and enforcement of the requirements, the adequacy of the requirements, and the competence of pilots (including foreign trainee pilots) currently operating in controlled airspace.

There was strong support for the notion that all pilots operating in controlled airspace should meet the same radio and English-language competency standards.

3.2.4.2 Safety concerns

Numerous respondents expressed concern about the English proficiency and radio skills of foreign trainee or cadet pilots. Some suggested that the radio and English language requirements need to be increased, while others suggested that the standards are not being administered correctly or are being bypassed. Some respondents criticised training operators and assessors for passing foreign trainee or cadet pilots as competent to use radio equipment and communicate in English, when in fact they do not meet the standards.

Some respondents also raised safety concerns related to communication issues, such as difficulty understanding foreign pilots in training areas, pilots with limited English skills posing safety risks, and instances where pilots work off scripts and fail to acknowledge other pilots' positions, leading to potential safety hazards.

Some respondents also indicated that, generally, RAAus pilots do not currently meet the radio proficiency standards needed to operate in controlled airspace and suggested that expanded training in radio competency would be required to ensure sport and recreation pilots can safely operate in controlled airspace.

3.2.4.3 Other comments and suggested changes

Numerous respondents also made comments and suggestions, including:

- CASA to provide more educational material for controlled airspace radio calls.
- The ability to complete assessments online or remotely, in recognition of the difficulty to access assessors in some regional areas.
- The English standards are not suitable for native English-speakers, and that native English-speakers should not be subject to the same English-language assessment as non-native English-speakers.
- RAAus pilots operating in controlled airspace should meet the AEL standards and be approved by an English Language Proficiency Assessor.
- Appropriately qualified RAAus instructors be able to deliver training in radio competencies.

3.2.5 CASA response

CASA acknowledges the broad support for the current objectives for prescribing radio and English language proficiency standards, and those standards prescribed in the Part 61 MOS. CASA will engage with internal and external stakeholders to explore what pathways could be made available for sport and recreation pilots to gain the radio and English language competencies and proficiencies required to operate in controlled airspace. Any changes will focus on ensuring all pilots meet and maintain the same standards prescribed in the Part 61 MOS.

CASA does not propose to make any changes to the requirement for native English-speakers to meet the AEL standard. The AEL is an ICAO requirement and is essential to provide assurance that radio-users can communicate in English using aviation-specific terminology and phraseology.

CASA notes the concern around the radio and English-language proficiency of some foreign student pilots, and other pilots. In many cases, where students are operating in training grounds under the supervision of a flight instructor, and it is reasonable to expect that they may not yet meet the radio or Aviation English-

language proficiency standards. The safety risk is expected to be managed by the flight training operator and the flight instructor.

3.3 Medical fitness

3.3.1 Question 1: Are the objectives for medical fitness appropriate and reasonable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 64 | 49.23% |
| Yes, with changes | 25 | 19.23% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 32 | 24.62% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 7 | 5.38% |
| Not answered | 2 | 1.54% |

Fifty-nine respondents (45%) also made comments to this question.

3.3.2 Question 2: Do the current requirements reflect the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 64 | 49.23% |
| Yes, with changes | 24 | 18.46% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 28 | 21.54% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 11 | 8.46% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Forty-seven respondents (36%) also made comments to this question.

3.3.3 Question 3: Do you have any suggestions or alternative methods for achieving the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|---|-------|---------|
| Yes (please include your suggestions below) | 46 | 35.38% |
| No | 76 | 58.46% |
| Not answered | 8 | 6.15% |

Forty-eight respondents (37%) also made comments to this question.

3.3.4 Themes

3.3.4.1 Suitability of objectives and current requirements

The majority of respondents indicated that the objectives of requiring medical fitness standards and the current requirements are suitable, as indicated by the high proportion of respondents who responded 'Yes' or 'Yes, with changes' to these questions. However, it is worth noting that a higher proportion of respondents responded 'Yes, with changes' than compared to other sections of this discussion paper.

This section of the discussion paper also received a significant amount of free-text comments.

3.3.4.2 Support for proposed Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme

The most common theme in the free-text comments was support for the Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme for private pilots. Respondents expressed support for a self-declaration medical similar to RAAus, where pilots assess their own medical fitness. These respondents suggested that self-assessment is already a common practice before every flight and that it would be more efficient and cost-effective for pilots than the current medical assessments required.

The Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme was proposed in a consultation separate to this discussion paper ([Class 5 medical self-declaration - \(PP 2302FS\)](#)).

3.3.4.3 Support for consistent standards

Respondents also suggested that that medical standards and requirements should be consistent across the different licensing schemes. If sport and recreation pilots operating under a sport aviation body are permitted in the future to operate in controlled airspace with a self-declared medical certification, then RPL holders licensed under Part 61 should be able to do so as well (with, for example, the Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme). RPL holders licensed under Part 61 should have the same medical requirements as other pilots if they want to access controlled airspace.

3.3.4.4 Comments on the suitability of current requirements

Respondents expressed an array of opinions on the suitability of current medical requirements and standards.

Many respondents suggested that the current medical requirements for recreational pilots are excessive and suggested that relaxing these requirements would allow more pilots to stay involved in aviation. This theme is closely linked to the strong support for the introduction of the Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme and emphasis on consistent standards.

Several respondents suggested that the medical requirements needed for a pilot to operate in controlled airspace should be maintained or strengthened. One respondent indicated that either a Class 1 or Class 2 medical should be required for operations in controlled airspace, while four suggested that the Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme should not proceed or that sport and recreation pilots should meet a higher medical standard.

Several respondents questioned the evidence supporting the current medical standards and their impact on safety outcomes. These respondents requested data to justify the need for higher standards and argued that other factors such as aircraft maintenance and pilot competency have a more significant influence on safety in controlled airspace. Linked to this, several respondents suggested that allowing access to controlled airspace should be based on pilot competency rather than medical certification.

3.3.5 CASA response

CASA acknowledges the support for the current objectives and standards for medical fitness, but also notes the responses requesting changes to existing standards, including support for accessing controlled airspace using self-declared medicals of various kinds. CASA will consider these responses, and the commencement of the Class 5 medical self-declaration scheme, in developing a future proposed policy.

3.4 Aircraft equipment

3.4.1 Question 1: Are the objectives for requiring aircraft to be fitted with nominated equipment suitable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 96 | 73.85% |
| Yes, with changes | 18 | 13.85% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 11 | 8.46% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 3 | 2.31% |
| Not answered | 2 | 1.54% |

Thirty-one respondents (24%) also made comments to this question.

3.4.2 Question 2: Are the current requirements suitable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 88 | 67.69% |
| Yes, with changes | 18 | 13.85% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 16 | 12.31% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 5 | 3.85% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Thirty-three respondents (25%) also made comments to this question.

3.4.3 Question 3: Do you have any suggestions or alternative methods for achieving the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|---|-------|---------|
| Yes (please include your suggestions below) | 37 | 28.46% |
| No | 86 | 66.15% |

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--------------|-------|---------|
| Not answered | 7 | 5.38% |

Forty-one respondents (32%) also made comments to this question.

3.4.4 Themes

3.4.4.1 Suitability of objectives and current requirements

The vast majority of respondents indicated that the objectives of requiring aircraft equipment and the current prescribed equipment is suitable, as indicated by the high proportion of respondents who responded 'yes' or 'yes, with changes' to these questions.

This section of the discussion paper also received numerous free-text comments.

3.4.4.2 Support for consistent standards

Consistency and standardised equipment requirements were also encouraged, with some respondents suggesting that all aircraft should meet the same minimum standards, regardless of their registration or type. Other respondents highlighted that some types of aircraft (such as unpowered aircraft, hot air balloons, and recreational aircraft like hang gliders and paragliders) cannot meet the same equipment requirements and suggested that suitable and practical equipment options should be available through exemptions where appropriate.

3.4.4.3 Call to enhance safety and other suggestions

Many respondents expressed a strong preference for enhanced safety measures in controlled airspace, including calling for transponders and ADS-B to be mandatory in all controlled airspace. Some respondents said this is essential for enhancing safety, situational awareness and collision avoidance.

Some respondents highlighted the cost considerations associated with equipment requirements. Although some respondents expressed support for mandatory transponders and ADS-B, others raised concerns about the affordability of these technologies, particularly for new experimental aircraft or recreational aircraft. Some suggested exploring more cost-effective options or providing subsidies to make the equipment more accessible.

Other respondents suggested that equipment requirements should be flexible and adaptable to keep pace with evolving technology and allow for the adoption of newer, more reliable, and safer equipment options as they become available. Linked to this request for flexibility, some respondents suggested that electronic conspicuity (EC) devices should be an approved alternative to full ADS-B transponders. These devices are considered more affordable and accessible options that can still enhance aircraft visibility.

Some respondents suggested that better information sharing between aviation navigation apps would improve overall situational awareness and facilitate better coordination among pilots, air traffic control (ATC), and aviation navigation apps.

3.4.5 CASA response

CASA acknowledges the broad support for the current objectives and requirements for aircraft equipment. CASA will engage with internal and external stakeholders to explore what pathways could be made available for sport and recreation pilots to operate in controlled airspace. CASA's policy is that equipment requirements for the same kind of aircraft operation in a particular kind of airspace should be consistent. The equipment sections of the MOS for the flight operations regulations Parts give effect to this policy, with certain MOS (for example the Part 131 MOS for balloons and hot air airships) permitting alternative

equipment that recognise different aircraft characteristics while still enabling an acceptable level of aviation safety.

Current designs of EC devices cannot substitute for a transponder-based system (including one that transmits ADS-B position information) for enabling access to surveillance-controlled airspace.

This is because EC devices are designed specifically to provide enhanced situational awareness for pilots with respect to aircraft in short-range proximity. Specifically, the modular design of typical EC devices mean they have a low signal output power (compared to a transponder) and lack an external antenna (which means signals can be shielded by an aircraft’s structure). These characteristics impact significantly on the ability for air traffic control to reliably receive position information from an EC device-equipped aircraft. Additionally, use of commercial off-the-shelf components in EC devices requires them to transmit a source integrity level (SIL – a position source’s probability of exceeding the reported integrity value) of ONE. This is below the minimum level acceptable for use in ATC services. To avoid clutter from this unusable information, position information from an EC-device equipped aircraft, even if detected by the ATC surveillance system, is currently filtered out and not displayed to the controller. CASA does not propose to permit EC devices to be an approved alternative to full ADS-B transponders.

CASA notes the numerous suggestions to mandate ADS-B for aircraft operating in controlled airspace, however, does not propose to make any changes as part of this project.

3.5 Priorities for airspace access

3.5.1 Question 1: Are the objectives for Class C and Class D access priorities suitable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 87 | 66.92% |
| Yes, with changes | 13 | 10.00% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 12 | 9.23% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 15 | 11.54% |
| Not answered | 3 | 2.31% |

Thirty-one respondents (24%) also made comments to this question.

3.5.2 Question 2: Are the current requirements suitable?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|--|-------|---------|
| Yes | 90 | 69.23% |
| Yes, with changes | 10 | 7.69% |
| No (please set out your reasoning and alternative suggestions below) | 10 | 7.69% |
| Undecided/Not my area of expertise | 16 | 12.31% |
| Not answered | 4 | 3.08% |

Eighteen respondents (14%) also made comments to this question.

3.5.3 Question 3: Do you have any suggestions or alternative methods for achieving the objectives?

| Option | Total | Percent |
|---|-------|---------|
| Yes (please include your suggestions below) | 20 | 15.38% |
| No | 105 | 80.77% |
| Not answered | 5 | 3.85% |

Eighteen respondents (14%) also made comments to this question.

3.5.4 Themes

3.5.4.1 Suitability of objectives and current requirements

The majority of respondents indicated that the objectives of airspace priorities and the current priorities are suitable, as indicated by the high proportion of respondents who responded 'Yes' or 'Yes, with changes' to these questions. However, it is worth noting that a higher proportion of respondents responded 'Undecided/Not my area of expertise' than compared to other sections of this discussion paper.

Free-text comments to this section generally expressed support for the principles underpinning airspace access priorities but indicated that they are not consistently enacted and suggested some cohorts of airspace users are effectively denied access to controlled airspace.

3.5.4.2 Current ability to access controlled airspace

Some respondents expressed frustration with instances where clearances are denied due to perceived high ATC workload. Some respondents suggested that ATC should have better workload management strategies to ensure clearances are not routinely declined or are not denied as a matter of convenience. Respondents suggested that non-commercial pilots are often denied clearance, even when they meet the necessary qualifications and have submitted flight plans. Some respondents suggested that, regardless of the type of aircraft or operation being conducted, all aircraft should be afforded the privilege of accessing controlled airspace as long as relevant licensing, equipment, and certification requirements are met.

3.5.4.3 Suggestions

Other respondents suggested to review and potentially revise the boundaries of controlled airspace and raised concerns about specific regions such as the Pilbara as needing improved airspace control.

3.5.5 CASA response

CASA acknowledges the broad support for the current objectives and requirements. After considering the responses to this question, CASA is not currently planning to propose any adjustments to airspace priorities.

3.6 Other comments

The final question asked for any additional comments about the issues raised in the discussion paper.

Seventy-four respondents (57%) made comments to this question. The key themes included:

- Call for sport and recreation pilots to have access to Class C and D airspace with appropriate training and equipment.
- Call for consistent competencies and standards for pilots and aircraft operating in Class C and D airspace.
- Concerns around the training and testing standards of ASAOs, and the ability of sport and recreation pilots to reach and maintain the required competencies.
- Call for RAAus to provide a training program and training endorsement for RAAus instructors who want to teach CTA/CTR, and call for these instructors to have at least a PPL granted under Part 61.
- Call to raise standards in aviation, and ensure that sport and recreation pilots meet the required competencies and standards before being permitted to operate in controlled airspace.
- Support and opposition in relation to pilots with various kinds of self-declared medicals accessing controlled airspace.
- Concerns about the airworthiness of sport and recreation aircraft and need for investigation of accidents and incidents, when they occur.
- Call for attention to operating non-certificated aircraft and engines over built-up areas, and the potentially limited operational flexibility of some sport and recreation aircraft.
- Limited capacity within ATC for certain areas and need for improved responsiveness to GA training flights.
- Desire for airport owners to operate airports as intended, rather than business parks.
- Support and opposition in relation to mandatory ADS-B OUT due to safety benefit.
- Satisfaction with current arrangements for flying in controlled airspace.
- Suggestion that CASA should also consider the security risk of ASAO flights into controlled airspace, and any security clearances required.

3.6.1 CASA responses

As many of the key themes mentioned above have been previously discussed in this SOC, these will not be discussed again here.

Regarding the comment relating to operating non-certificated aircraft and engines over built-up areas, CASA acknowledges that many built-up areas are located underneath controlled airspace. However, pilots should be aware that separate rules apply to controlled airspace access and operations over built-up areas. CASA will review its guidance material to ensure that this is appropriately explained to pilots. If a pilot is permitted to operate an aircraft in controlled airspace and ATC directs the pilot over a populous area, but the aircraft does not meet the populous area requirements, the pilot is expected to advise ATC that they cannot comply with the ATC instruction as the aircraft is not permitted to overfly the populous area. The pilot would subsequently be rerouted by ATC to avoid populous areas, or be directed to leave controlled airspace.

CASA will assess whether the comment regarding the security risk of ASAO flights into controlled airspace requires further consideration, however, does not currently anticipate special rules needing to exist in relation to this matter.

4 Future direction

CASA is developing a policy proposal which focuses on ensuring all pilots and aircraft accessing controlled airspace are equivalently competent and equipped to current standards and requirements.

The proposed policy would permit ASAOs to issue certification for sport and recreation pilots to operate in Class C and Class D controlled airspace, where aircraft and pilot certification from those ASAOs can achieve equivalent policy objectives to those outlined in the DP.

CASA will engage with internal and external stakeholders, including ASAOs that are expected to have the capability to deliver this certification, and publish a policy proposal for consultation before the end of June 2024.

The timing of further consultation regarding legislative changes will depend on the details of the policy proposal that follows internal and external stakeholder engagement.