Australian Government
Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Unique Australian Airworthiness Directives

Policy Framework

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Unique Australian Airworthiness Directives – Policy Framework

Contents

Introduction

Airworthiness Directives (ADs) are a key mechanism for aviation regulators to help maintain aviation safety and prevent incidents and accidents caused or contributed to by unsafe conditions in aircraft, engines, propellers and other components, that are in service. ADs are a global system under the ICAO safety framework, to which Australia is a signatory. Given their key role in aviation safety, it is important that ADs deliver their intended safety benefit by being appropriately targeted, current, relevant, operationally clear and non-contradictory. To provide the best safety outcome they should also support proper compliance by not placing unnecessary burden and cost on industry, which includes aircraft owners and operators and aircraft maintainers.

Currently, a number of historical Australian ADs affecting general aviation aircraft below 5700kg remain active. Some of these were not derived from a State of Design (SoD) AD and have uniquely Australian requirements. They also pre-date policy and regulation changes in 2009 that introduced a streamlined and globally coordinated approach to the issue and administration of ADs in Australia. These pre-2009 unique Australian ADs affecting general aviation aircraft below 5700kg are the focus of this policy framework.

A number of the unique Australian ADs have over a period of time generated confusion and concerns, as well as complaints from industry that they cause additional cost and administrative burden. Given the ongoing concerns, CASA committed in the 2025 GA Workplan to review unique Australian ADs to '*remove duplication and ensure any unique Australian differences align with contemporary policy and regulatory approaches*.'

CASA has in the past invested significant resources, time and effort to consider how pre-2009 Australian ADs should be treated. On at least 3 occasions, reviews of the ADs have been conducted with many historical ADs cancelled as a result. These reviews focused on the removal of all substantive Australian differences where this could be justified through an engineering assessment.

However, further reviews of remaining ADs using this approach is unlikely to validate any further cancellations due to insufficient engineering justification, including that some ADs relate to critical aircraft components. Also, experience has been that these engineering assessments are time-consuming, resource intensive and dependent on relevant data being available. For this reason, consideration of the remaining ADs is proposed to be progressed through application of a policy framework, rather than an engineering assessment.

The purpose of this policy framework is to provide a set of robust, consistent and repeatable guidelines to underpin CASA's review of the remaining pre-2009 unique Australian ADs and assist with future decision-making on whether they can be cancelled, or whether they should be amended or maintained on a review cycle.

At this stage, the policy framework is targeted to unique Australian ADs that affect general aviation aircraft under 5700kg. However, future work could consider the suitability of the policy to unique Australian ADs affecting other aircraft.

Background

ADs are legislative instruments which address safety issues in aircraft, engines, propellers, or other components. They are designed to notify industry of unsafe conditions that have been identified in an aeronautical product in service and to ensure continued airworthiness by mandating actions to be taken in relation to the unsafe condition such as inspections, modifications, repairs or operational limitations.

ADs are issued by national aviation authorities (NAAs) but can arise from various sources such as manufacturer findings (including manufacturer service bulletins), incident and accident investigations, operational feedback, regulatory oversight and international coordination through ICAO member States.

Prior to October 2009, foreign-issued ADs were not accepted in Australia. CASA and its predecessors (CASA) issued Australian ADs regardless of the SoD of the aircraft or product. The FAA follows this approach, although SoD ADs may be incorporated by reference.

Historically, CASA took a proactive and precautionary approach to issuing ADs. This resulted in many ADs being issued for overseas products based on manufacturer service bulletins, service defect reports, periodic maintenance requirements, and predictive fatigue analyses conducted by CASA at the time of aircraft acceptance based on data provided by the manufacturer. This created a significant number of unique Australian ADs, some of which were issued dating back to the 70s, and which have remained active unless cancelled by previous reviews.

CASA's policy on issue and administration of ADs has changed over time. In October 2009 a major policy shift was introduced through amendments to the *Civil Aviation Safey Regulations 1998* (CASR) *Part 39—Airworthiness Directives* to provide that ADs issued by the SoD after October 2009 are accepted and apply directly in Australia without amendment. NAAs such as EASA and the CAA in New Zealand also follow this practice.

This approach recognises that the SoD NAA is typically in the best position to understand and respond to the safety risks associated with design or manufacture deficiencies of aircraft or products in service. However, it relies on the SoD providing a level of safety oversight and risk appetite that is assumed to be acceptable to CASA in relation to Australian aircraft.

Under CASR Regulation 39.001, CASA may still develop and issue an AD should an airworthiness concern conclude that an unsafe condition exists in an aircraft and the condition exists or is likely to exist in other Australian aircraft. This provides a safety-net and recognises the independence of CASA as an NAA despite harmonisation in civilian aviation safety efforts through ICAO. Since 2009, however, CASA would only typically deviate from the position taken by the SoD where local contextual circumstances exist, or where CASA has reason to believe that the SoD has not addressed the unsafe condition.

The current regulatory and policy approach for ADs has and will continue to deliver enduring benefits by managing continued operational safety more efficiently both in short and longer-term. It reflects the shift towards a more outcome-focussed, risk-informed regulatory approach in line with CASA's Regulatory Philosophy and Statement of Expectations. Since 2009, there has been a significant reduction in the number of unique Australian ADs issued and this has reduced duplication across Australian aircraft fleets and administration of the suite of ADs in Australia.

Many of the historical unique Australian ADs do not meet the current regulatory and policy criteria for an AD and would not be issued by CASA under the current rules. This is a key element within the policy

problem as well as being a threshold consideration in applying the proposed policy framework (see further below).

It is also relevant to note that ADs operate as one element of a broader aviation safety system, alongside aircraft certification, continuing airworthiness and maintenance requirements (including any Instructions for Continued Airworthiness (ICA) issued by the manufacturer), operational rules, and other requirements, to manage safety risks across an aircraft's life. Aircraft operators have a responsibility to assess and disposition any safety-related ICA and other requirements to assure the safety and airworthiness of the aircraft[1].

Policy problem

The core policy problem that led to development of this policy framework is the need to determine an acceptable methodology for the treatment of the remaining pre-2009 unique Australian ADs that will enable CASA to achieve its commitment in the 2025 GA Workplan, while maintaining an acceptable level of safety. This is complex due to a number of factors, including:

- different legal requirements and policies applying to ADs over a number of years, effectively creating a hybrid AD system in Australia
- some historical ADs being issued to address an unsafe condition, while others such as engine/propeller maintenance ADs are not linked to an existing safety condition and could potentially create an unsafe condition
- differences between Australian ADs and the requirements of an AD issued by the SoD and how these are justified on the one hand, and the potential impacts of removing them on the other
- many unique Australian ADs have been in place for decades and are institutionalised in maintenance routines. Change could be disruptive and create confusion and cost for industry
- some remaining unique Australian ADs create confusion and complaints from industry, while others are thought to cause little burden to industry due to essentially being ineffective or obsolete
- uncertainty about the impact of changes on both industry and CASA.

Appendix 1 sets out five categories of the remaining unique ADs for GA aircraft under 5700kg that are considered to cause the most confusion and complaints from industry, or that would otherwise benefit from a fresh review and assessment under this policy framework. The categorisation of these ADs has also helped to inform development of the framework.

Purpose and benefits of the policy framework

The purpose of development and application of the policy framework is to provide an alternative methodology to individual technical engineering assessments for the review and decisions on the treatment of pre-2009 unique Australian ADs. The framework is targeted to the achievement of the objective in the 2025 GA Workplan to reduce duplication and align the treatment of ADs with contemporary policy, risk and regulatory approaches. It also supports the broad objective in the GA

[1] Particular requirements apply to scheduled air-transport operators (and eventually all air-transport operators) to have an approved maintenance program based on the type certificate holder's ICA, with important safety-related ICA needing to be demonstrably considered by the operator even if not an AD requirement.

Workplan to reduce regulatory burden, ensure sustainability and drive continual improvement for general aviation.

It builds on the extensive work undertaken by CASA over a period of years to remove substantive Australian differences and rationalise inconsistencies in unique Australian ADs that may have airworthiness implications, noting the previous work led to the cancellation of a significant number of historical unique Australian ADs.

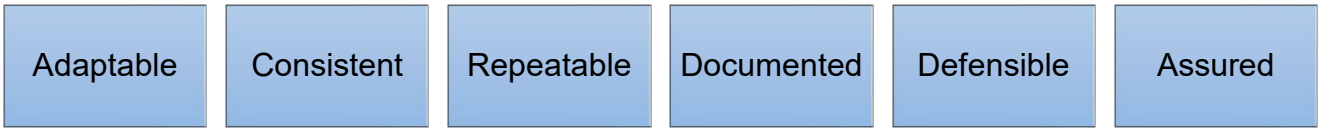
The key benefits of a policy framework are that it can be aligned with CASA's strategic objectives, providing long-term viability and a platform to engage with stakeholders (both within CASA and industry) to help build consensus and acceptance. That is, it helps to explain both the 'what' and the 'why' of the approach on a broader scale across the remaining ADs, providing greater consistency and predictability. This may help to resolve past uncertainty about the impact of the changes on industry and CASA and give greater confidence to resolve the treatment of these ADs.

The framework is adaptable and repeatable, while providing an efficient, methodical and structured process. In terms of application, can be applied to individual ADs or to categories of ADs noting that a category of ADs could be defined in a number of ways (see also **Appendix 1)**. It also enables flexibility for future decisions to be made in relation to any alternate categorisation of ADs for review and assessment under the framework, allowing for resources to be allocated based on prioritisation and availability.

The policy framework encourages consistency and standardisation and supports contemporary risk and outcome-based decision-making. It provides assurance that appropriate consideration is given to all relevant factors, while remaining mindful of the primacy of aviation safety. The policy principles also reflect key elements of good governance, including transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness and equity. For decision-makers, the framework will help to ensure that decisions on the treatment of ADs are consistent, defensible and assured.

Figure 1 highlights the key benefits of the policy framework.

Figure 1: Benefits of the policy framework



Policy framework

The policy framework is a set of guiding principles within three key focus areas to assist in assessing pre-2009 unique Australian ADs.

The three broad focus areas in the policy framework are:

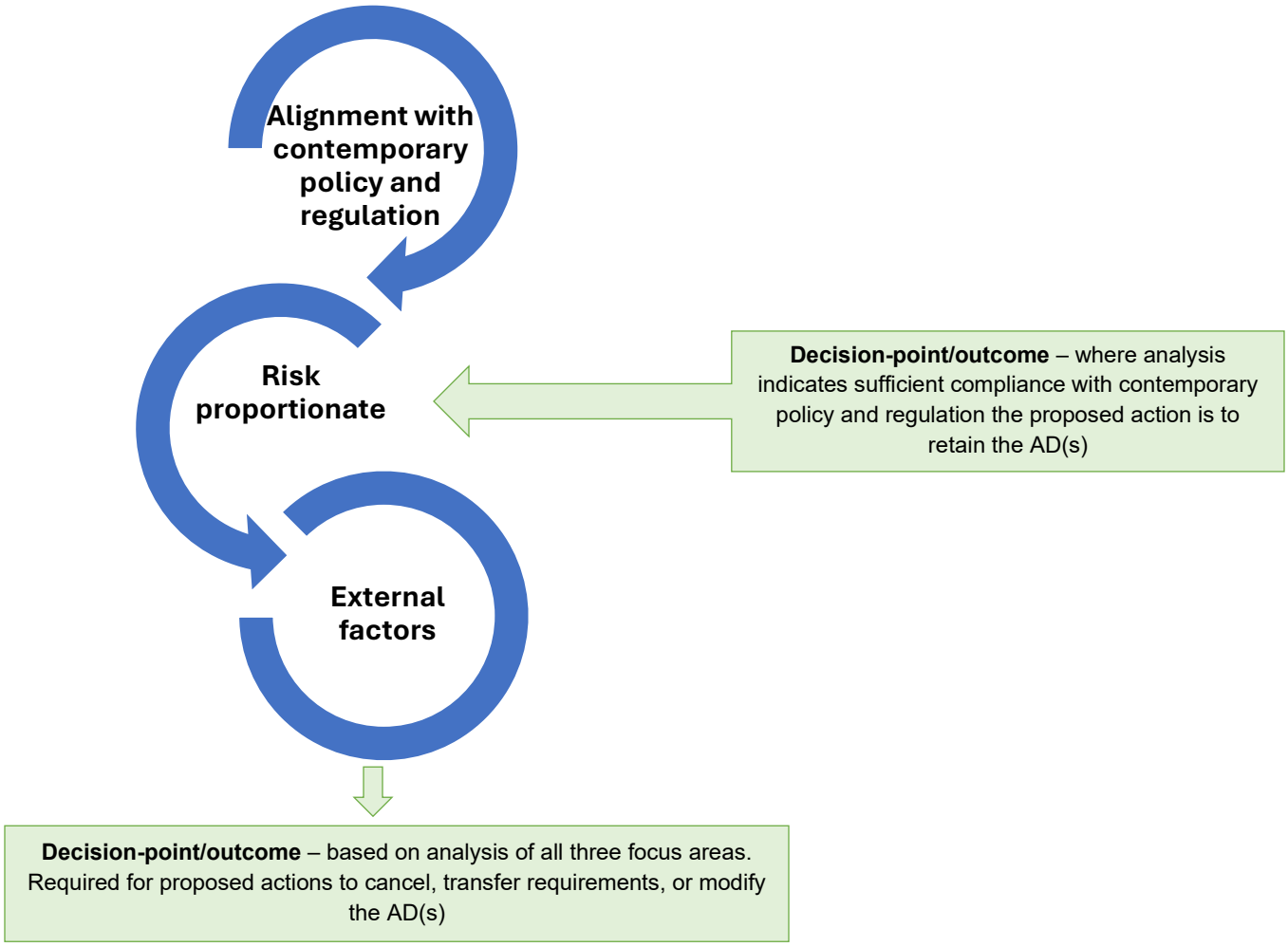
- Alignment with contemporary policy and regulation
- Risk proportionate
- External factors.

While the policy framework is not, and is not intended to be, a process or procedure document, these focus areas are set out in a structured workflow, which also allows for an early decision-point in the assessment where this is appropriate. This ensures flexibility and efficency in the application of the framework. It may also help to prioritise categories of ADs being considered for review. For example, if the analysis of an AD or category of ADs on alignment with contemporary policy and regulation is that there is sufficient alignment and the AD would likely be issued under current Part 39 regulation and policy, a decision to retain the AD(s) could be made at that point. This would be the outcome of application of the policy framework in this case. If the analysis indicates there is not sufficient alignment, however, the analysis would proceed to the consideration of risk and external factors to determine the outcome.

To support a proposed action involving cancelling, transfer of the requirements to another mechanism or modifying ADs, it is important that the principles across the three focus areas are considered to assist decision-makers, ensure the rationale is clear and complete and that all factors have been considered. The depth of consideration required against each principle may change on a case-by-case basis depending on the nature and complexity of the ADs and the proposed outcome. There may also be some overlap between the focus areas and some of the principles.

Figure 2 illustrates the three focus areas, the structured workflow and possible decision-points.

Figure 2: Focus areas, workflow and possible decision-points



Further information on each of these key areas, and the policy principles within each area, is set out below. Also set out below is a description of how the policy principles can be applied and a number of questions that could help to guide the assessment of ADs. The questions are designed cover a broad range of ADs, or categories of ADs, and can be tailored to the ADs or category being considered – that is, they are suggested for guidance and are not mandatory, or necessarily exhaustive.

The analysis and recommended approach for action in relation to an AD or category of ADs would be set out in a separate policy statement or comparable document which addresses the policy principles, provides the rationale and relevant risks and mitigations relating to the proposed action, and where relevant includes the views, inputs and outcomes of engagement with stakeholders and industry.

This will give decision-makers assurance that all factors have been considered and that the decision they are being asked to make is consistent, defensible, and appropriately documented in line with the objectives of the policy framework. It will also serve as a useful record for future consideration, reference and evaluation.

As noted above, potential outcomes of applying the framework to ADs or categories of ADs are:

- cancelling the AD
- transferring the AD's provisions to CASR, other legislative instruments, or guidance material
- amending the AD
- retaining the AD.

Alignment with contemporary policy and regulation

This focus area is about reviewing unique Australian ADs through a modern policy and regulatory lens, which includes validation of the ongoing relevance of the AD or category of ADs in the current Australian aviation environment.

The key policy principles in this focus are:

- ❖ Validation of ongoing relevance
- ❖ Outcome-focussed
- ❖ Evidence-based
- ❖ Internationally harmonised.

The focus is on the achievement of desired results or outcomes, rather than maintaining historically rigid and prescriptive requirements, and agile thinking about how safety and quality objectives could be achieved in different ways to enhance regulatory coherence and reduce burden.

The retention of any unique Australian ADs should be evidence-based having regard to available data and be proportionate to CASA's contemporary risk appetite. It should take account of all relevant considerations and implications both positive and negative, as well as the regulatory burden on industry and the efficient use of resources within CASA, in addition to preserving an acceptable level of safety for civil aviation in Australia.

Assessing the ADs with a contemporary policy and regulatory lens will enable alignment with the principles in CASA's Regulatory Philosophy and Statement of Expectations, which supports a reduction in regulatory burden in lower-risk circumstances and more tailored and proportionate approaches to regulation. It also seeks to ensure that requirements are internationally harmonised unless there are clear and justified reasons to deviate, while delivering measurable and predictable safety outcomes.

The principle of international harmonisation also involves examining the experience of, and approach to, ADs in other countries, including both those with a much larger general aviation sector and number of operating aircraft (such as the USA) as well as those more similar to Australia (such as Canada or New Zealand). In each case, this would provide an important source of information and is a key benefit of Australia's international harmonisation and collaboration. To this end, assessing each category of ADs would include investigating and considering the actions of other national aviation authorities in relation to the issue and any cancellation of ADs and how Australia's approach and aviation environment is comparable. Countries with a much larger general aviation sector and number of operating aircraft may also provide a valuable source of data and information on the safety record of relevant aircraft that may help to inform the assessment of certain categories of ADs.

In addition, alignment with contemporary policy and regulation involves critical thinking about whether certain airworthiness requirements are best placed in historical uniquely Australia ADs or whether the desired safety outcomes would be better achieved by incorporation of necessary requirements into CASR rulesets, or be managed through advisory bulletins that do not impose mandatory compliance in relation to lower-risk issues.

Application of these policy principles to the assessment of unique Australian ADs

Over time, the trigger for issue of an Australian AD has changed from being proactive[2] to being reactive with the introduction of CASR Part 39 which intended to harmonise Australia with Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) 39[3]. As noted above, a further significant policy change was made in 2009 to accept SoD ADs, which has substantially reduced the issue of unique Australian ADs.

In the current airworthiness regulatory and policy environment, the triggers for issue of a unique Australian AD are that an unsafe condition exists in an aircraft and the condition exists or is likely to exist in other Australian aircraft, and also that specific local contextual circumstances exist or there is reason to believe that an AD issued by the SoD has not addressed the unsafe condition. That is, the unsafe condition must exist in the first instance. There must also be justifiable reasons for putting in place different or additional requirements that are unique to aircraft in Australia.

While these regulatory and policy changes have previously supported the cancellation of a large number of historical unique Australian ADs, alignment with CASR Part 39 and CASA's current airworthiness

[2] Prior to 2000, ADs were issued in accordance with CAR 37A which enable promulgation of ADs if an unsafe condition exists **or** is likely to exist in an aircraft.
[3] This required CASA to issue an AD only if an unsafe condition exists in an aircraft, and the condition is likely to exist in other aircraft of that type.

policy approach provides a benchmark and remains a fundamental consideration for the review of the remaining unique Australian ADs.

It is also relevant to consider the international policy and regulatory environment. This includes determining whether the requirements of an Australian AD are actually unique, or whether they are derived from an SoD AD or are mandating maintenance manual/aircraft manual airworthiness limitations. Further, the response of NAAs to the ongoing airworthiness of aircraft fleets that also operate in Australia may also provide a more appropriate mechanism for managing ageing aircraft fleets to achieve the required safety outcomes. For example, the FAA now issues SoD ADs in response to emergent safety conditions in older aircraft in response to accident/incidents and these now have applicability in Australia under CASR Part 39 (for example Piper PA28/PA32 wing spar fatigue ADs).

Policy questions that may be considered for this key area are:

- Does the AD address a clearly defined unsafe condition that exists in an aircraft and the condition exists, or is likely to exist, or could develop, in other aircraft or aeronautical products of that kind?
- In retrospect, if the issue arose today, would CASA's regulatory and policy approach require the issue of the same AD requirements under CASR Part 39? Is the AD aligned with CASA's contemporary risk appetite that informs the current regulatory and policy approach?
- For structural fatigue ADs, is the life limitation prescribed in the AD mandated by airworthiness limitations in the maintenance manual/aircraft flight manual or an SoD AD or is derived from an SoD AD? Are the Australian requirements 'unique'? Is Australia the SoD?
- Is there a SoD AD that would supersede the AD?
- Are there any justified specific local contextual circumstances that would require retention of the AD?
- Is the defect data, incident/accident history still available as evidence that an unsafe condition still exists or would indicate that structural fatigue may have been a factor?
- Is there a justified need to retain a unique Australian AD when it is more restrictive/onerous than the OEM/Manufacturer requirements contained in ICA?
- Is the safety concern currently addressed in the OEM maintenance manual/ICA?
- Is CASA's historical approach to issuing Australian unique, life-limit/fatigue ADs appropriate and justified to be retained having regard to:
    - possible inconsistencies in the methodology relating to the assessment of the data at the time of aircraft acceptance and certification and the mandating of life limits for some aircraft models and not for other similar aircraft types
    - that the remaining unique Australian fatigue ADs cause much concern and burden on owners and operators, as these aircraft now approach the stated life limits
    - individual requests for an alternative means of compliance are time-consuming, costly and resource intensive for the development of life extension programs for continuing airworthiness inspection program requirements.

Risk proportionate

This focus area is about critically testing whether unique Australian ADs remain appropriate and justifiable for the risk they seek to address, and assessing whether certain ADs may create unintended risks and impacts, including the potential to create an unsafe condition. This includes identifying cases where the risks of maintaining a particular AD may actually outweigh the risks of cancelling it when viewed through a policy lens.

It also seeks to move away from the historical view of risk management where all risks were considered 'bad' with the status quo being the safest and default approach. This can often be to the detriment of other factors such as effectiveness and efficiency leading to an overall poorer outcome.

The key policy principles in this focus area are:

- ❖ Contemporary risk management
- ❖ Defensibility
- ❖ Measured and responsible
- ❖ Free from arbitrary action or a 'status quo' approach
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluation.

A risk proportionate approach avoids a 'one-size fits all' solution. Moving away from the historical approach evident in some remaining unique Australian ADs that have open-ended generic application will give greater confidence that any ADs that do remain are focussed where they are most needed to manage high-risk issues. It will also help support the removal of regulatory burden for requirements dealing with lower-risk issues, or issues that could instead be managed through non-mandatory mechanisms such as advisory bulletins.

A risk proportionate approach also recognises that risks are not static and may vary across different contexts. Contemporary risk management is dynamic meaning that monitoring and evaluation will be part of the process to inform any broader application of the policy and to give decision-makers assurance that appropriate action will be taken if new information emerges or circumstances change.

Application of these policy principles to the assessment of unique Australian ADs

Historically, CASA's proactive approach to the issue of ADs (and the regulatory framework applying at the time) has meant that a number of unique ADs were issued that:

- are inconsistent with the requirements in ADs issued by the SoD for an aircraft
- that are not based on actual defect or incident/accident data to justify the need for AD action beyond the requirements within OEM ICA
- have requirements that are not derived from a SoD AD, including unique 'fatigue' ADs that mandate life limitations for wings and airframe structures for aircraft operating in Australia that may not apply elsewhere including in the SoD

- contain maintenance policy which does not strictly meet the requirements under current CASR Part 39 for addressing an existing unsafe condition
- apply generically to open-ended make, model, type of aircraft, being a 'one size fits all' approach
- are, in essence, now covered by OEM ICA, for example, Cessna Supplemental Inspection Documents (SIDs)
- relate to older 'equipment' and that are no longer needed for addressing a current unsafe condition, or would no longer be accurate or effective in terms of their requirements, or are otherwise obsolete.

Assessment of these ADs under this policy framework can recognise that CASA now has the benefit of knowledge that was not available at the time many of the unique ADs were issued, especially those which relied on a predictive analysis based on data provided at the time of aircraft certification in Australia. GA aircraft fleets have now aged to the extent that actual defect data and incident/accident history can be considered as these aircraft approach the life limitations stated in certain fatigue unique Australian ADs.

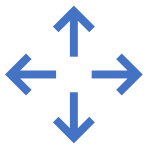
Furthermore, the utilisation of aircraft over its lifetime as well as the risk associated with the operations being undertaken can also be taken into account. This allows for a more customised approach that is consistent with CASA's contemporary risk approach, noting many GA aircraft under 5700kgs are 50 or more years old and are low-utilisation aircraft used only in private and aerial work operations that do not carry fare-paying passengers. As noted above, any SoD ADs issued in response to data or accident/incidents also now apply in Australia. This allows experience around the globe to inform AD requirements in Australia, noting that in Australia has a comparatively small general aviation sector.

Policy questions that may be considered for this focus area are:

- Is the AD still relevant and evidenced by defect data or by incident/accident history?
- Are the requirements in the AD targeted to a particular make, model of aircraft in seeking to address an unsafe condition?
- Regarding operational categories, does the AD align with CASA's current risk appetite, particularly for older low-utilisation aircraft used for private and aerial work operations (i.e. non air-transport)?
- Does the required action in the AD create risk or unintended consequences that may outweigh the original safety benefit of the AD? For example, more frequent, invasive inspections of older aircraft that could potentially induce damage to components, structures, fastener holes, or introduce defects.
- Is the AD defensible in the current aviation regulatory and operational environment, particularly where there is confusion, cost and burden for industry?
- What lessons can be learned and what have been the implications of any relevant previous approvals of Alternate Means of Compliance (AMOC)?
- Is the AD perpetuating regulatory inefficiency and unnecessary ongoing confusion and regulatory burden on industry?

- Has the overall system or approach to maintenance of GA aircraft evolved such that concern about safety is now routinely and effectively managed within manufacturer maintenance schedules or the issue is effectively dealt with through other regulatory or safety requirements.
- Is the AD compliance requirement a 'once off' (terminating action) or a more burdensome recurring ongoing compliance (i.e. each 100 hours or annual inspection)?
- What alternate means are available to achieve the required safety outcomes, for example transfer of requirements in certain ADs to CASR rulesets (for example, Part 43, Part 42 or CAO 100.5) where they could be written as performance-based standards rather than mandatory black and white prescriptive requirements that are a 'one-size-fits-all'?
- Could certain low-risk requirements be transferred into advisory bulletins that do not impose mandatory requirements?

External factors



This focus area is about taking account of the broader factors that may place regulatory burden and cost on industry and on aircraft owners and maintainers, noting that each AD will have cost and operational impacts. The costs and impacts may also affect different sectors disproportionately, for example, very low-utilisation aircraft used for private operations may be subjected to unnecessarily higher costs.

Aircraft maintainers may also be adversely affected by time and effort required to be expended on, and the risks associated with, carrying out repetitive inspections and requirements in unique Australian ADs that are not based on justifiable evidence that an unsafe condition actually exists.

This also has flow-on impacts, particularly as maintenance resources and expertise for ageing GA fleets are reduced and availability of maintainers becomes stretched. In this sense, it is critical that maintenance resources are targeted to the most important safety-critical actions to ensure continued airworthiness of aircraft and components and provide the intended safety outcomes for Australian aviation.

The key policy principles in this focus area are:

- ❖ Taking account of diverse impacts on different sectors of industry and different aircraft operations
- ❖ Minimisation of regulatory burden and cost based on a risk proportionate approach
- ❖ Actions informed by consultative and collaborative stakeholder engagement
- ❖ Greater clarity in what are CASA's mandatory requirements
- ❖ Enhancing efficiency.

While not strictly an 'external factor', the benefits of cleaning-up historical unique Australian ADs should also be considered in terms of the future impacts on CASA. While old series 'equipment' ADs, for example, may be viewed as non-contentious and having little impact to industry there is likely to be no tangible benefit in retaining them. As time goes on, opportunities for CASA to streamline and rationalise

these ADs is likely to be more difficult as it becomes unclear as to why they remain active and have not previously been cancelled. This is both inefficient and not aligned with good governance principles.

Application of these principles to the assessment of unique Australian ADs

A number of remaining unique Australian ADs are likely to impose unnecessary regulatory burden and cost on industry, which is supported by previous industry feedback and complaints. While some other ADs are thought to place little to no burden on industry, they are resource intensive (and therefore costly) and inefficient for CASA to maintain. Both of these circumstances are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer-term.

Application of these principles seeks to examine the broader impacts of an AD on industry and on CASA in line with contemporary regulatory and policy approaches and CASA's Regulatory Philosophy, including having regard to cost and regulatory burden.

Understanding these impacts in the current environment, and the impact of any proposed action in relation to an AD or category of ADs, will require engagement with industry. This could be undertaken in different ways, either early in the process to help inform development of a proposed action, or at a later stage to test the validity or support for a proposed action. It could also be undertaken through a formal consultation process or through targeted engagement with a small group of trusted stakeholders. Previous feedback and complaints are also relevant but these may need to be confirmed noting that pain-points change over time.

Regardless of the process, the focus of the principles is to ensure that there is meaningful and transparent engagement with stakeholders and that CASA is in a fully informed position before taking action on the ADs. This will support good decision-making and build consensus and acceptance on the treatment of ADs. It is also a fundamental part of policy consideration and decision-making.

Policy questions that may be considered for this focus area are:

- What can be learned from previous feedback on unique Australian ADs?
- How are different sectors of industry impacted by the AD? Are there disproportionate impacts that are not justified in the current regulatory and policy environment?
- How has the aviation environment changed since the AD was issued and does this affect the continued need for AD action?
- Does the proposed action on an AD take account of all relevant factors including cost?
- Has the proposed action been informed by industry engagement and is it supported? If not, what are the concerns?
- Does the proposed action assist to streamline and rationalise historical unique Australian ADs, providing future benefits to CASA including enhancing efficiency?

Policy framework lifecycle

The policy framework has an iterative lifecycle involving a ‘build, test, refine’ approach. This will ensure it is relevant, robust, fit for purpose, and evolves through learnings and experience.

Development of the framework and initial categorisation of the remaining pre-2009 unique Australian ADs has been informed by input from both airworthiness subject matter experts and policy experts. Also defined within the framework is its purpose and scope and a high-level structure for its application. This ensures the framework has a solid starting point and that it aligns with CASA’s strategic goals and objectives.

As a next step, it may be beneficial to test and validate the application of the policy framework to a ‘real life’ scenario to assess whether it is effective and efficient and whether there are any weaknesses or gaps. This would be achieved by applying the framework to a lower-risk category of ADs as a test/validation case, including seeking a decision from the nominated delegate on the proposed outcome.

Ongoing evaluation and learnings from the test case will enable refinement of the policy, including any feedback from stakeholders or decision-makers, and iterative adjustment to improve it for future AD assessments of more complex and contentious AD categories. The framework is therefore intended to remain dynamic throughout its lifecycle.

Appendix 1 - Categories of remaining unique Australian ADs

There are currently approximately 150 unique Australian ADs affecting General Aviation aircraft below 5700kg. The below reflects a thematic categorisation which could be used to assess multiple ADs that have some commonality in terms of the broad issue they seek to address. However, it would also be possible to categorise the ADs using other criteria, which this policy framework does not prevent.

1. **Beechcraft wing bolt ADs**: These ADs relate to wing bolt maintenance for certain Beechcraft aircraft. These ADs require more onerous maintenance actions compared to the SoD. Industry feedback indicates that they are rigid and costly for private operators.

   Additionally, concern has been raised that maintenance actions required by these ADs could have safety impact by unintentionally causing maintenance-induced errors and/or damage. From an engineering perspective, wing bolts are a key aircraft safety component.

2. **Structural fatigue ADs**: These ADs were issued at the time of aircraft type acceptance in Australia and typically relied on predictive analysis conducted by CASA based on data provided by the manufacturer.

   These ADs are contentious because historically the SoD did not issue comparable predictive fatigue lifespan ADs, and the fatigue lifespan is becoming imminent for many older aircraft.

   Life limit fatigue ADs mean that operators are effectively required to scrap or retire their aircraft or aircraft components such as wings for aircraft in Australia that may not be subject to such action in other states including the SoD.

   The FAA now manages fatigue in older aircraft by issuing life-limiting SoD ADs in response to accident/incident occurrences (e.g. Piper wing spar ADs) which now apply to Australian aircraft.

   The Australian unique fatigue ADs have limited applicability to specific aircraft models. It has been acknowledged that the methods CASA used to assess data provided at the time of aircraft certification to support issue of these ADs was inconsistent. The reasons and rationale for issue and retention of these ADs is therefore arguably less unclear.

3. **ADs that mandate maintenance policy:** Specifically, this refers to AD/PROP/1, AD/ENG/4 and AD/ENG/5. These ADs do not address an unsafe condition but instead reflect CASA's policy on engine and propeller overhaul requirements in General Aviation. This is inconsistent with the current airworthiness regulation, which requires an unsafe condition to exist. The broad applicability of these ADs and their prescriptive nature (rather than outcomes-based) have also led to mixed industry views.

   While some operators benefit from the relief these ADs offer, others find them financially burdensome due to the lack of flexibility and operator discretion. Over time, amendments to these ADs have created confusion, and CASA's attempts to transition them into more suitable legislation or guidance have not been progressed.

4. **Cessna SIDs ADs**: These ADs address what are now Supplemental Inspection Document (SIDs) requirements. Since Cessna has released the SIDs as manufacturer's ICA, there is duplication and occasional contradiction with the existing unique Australian ADs.

Cessna's SIDs requirements are more targeted and less repetitive, with longer inspection intervals. Industry feedback highlights concern over the lack of alignment between Cessna's SIDs and unique Australian ADs addressing the same topics, particularly for specific aircraft types.

5. **Other various obsolete ADs** not captured by the categories above: Several ADs remain across various aircraft series and also particularly the older 'Equipment' ADs that can be considered obsolete and only seemingly exist for historical reasons.

   The equipment AD series means the equipment or appliances that are fitted to multiple aircraft types and models and therefore not limited to one aircraft manufacturer. They can be found here: Airworthiness Directives - Equipment | Civil Aviation Safety Authority.

   Many of the AD in this category required 'one-off' compliance, with all aircraft on the register expected to already be compliant. These ADs are thought to be non-contentious and pose little burden to industry.