

Defence Aviation Rules – Underpinning our Contemporary Aviation System

The new Defence Aviation Rules have now been introduced to the Air Force. Deputy Chief of Air Force Air Commodore Ian Mower and Wing Commander Hilton Baker tell us what the contemporary aviation system actually means.



**B | DEPUTY CHIEF OF AIR FORCE
Y | AIR COMMODORE IAN MOWER**

This journey has now well and truly begun with the arrival of our first P-8A Poseidon late last year and with tangible progress being made on our new airworthiness system.

Both milestones represent excellent steps forward as we shift the dial on our Air Force and step into a modern era, typified by modern aircraft designed and supported by contemporary standards.

It's a challenging time but one that's been well thought through and ultimately underpinned by a framework that's widely recognised as "best in class".

The journey to the start line began in 2017, with our intention to align with the European Military Aviation Requirements (EMARs) and the adoption of our own Defence Aviation Rules (DARs) shortly thereafter.

Throughout the early stages of this transformation we, along with a number of our close military partners, took a cautious and staged approach that set the platform for where we find ourselves today.

The level of understanding, gained along the way, has enabled a "sense and adjust" approach to the change programme whereby we've been able to critically evaluate our underlying philosophies and review our organisational assumptions.

This staged approach has led us to better understand the foundations of the EMAR system, as well as our own organisational construct in order to deliver a more efficient, operationally-focussed system, the results of which we acknowledge this month.

However, a change programme of this scale and reach cannot be successfully implemented from within – external support has been a key feature of the programme.

Engagement with partners and international subject matter experts have aided the programme immensely by keeping us aligned and on track. We've benefited from the international experience of the team from Baines Simmons Ltd (BSL), renowned as experts in this area.

BSL has provided an excellent sounding board not only for what good looks like but also for expert advice and perspectives when we've needed to tailor an approach around some of our unique and at times demanding requirements. Without their input we would have struggled to meet deadlines and with reaching the quality and standard of framework we've achieved throughout this change process.

However, with any significant change initiative it's nearly always the calibre of people that will ultimately determine success or failure.



Without exception, the dedication and commitment of those involved with the introduction of DARs, over a number of years, has underpinned its success to date.

Their efforts cannot be understated in terms of deep intellectual thought when applying an Air Force context and also with the constant need to balance competing priorities.

Perhaps the most striking measure of these efforts has been that much of it has occurred over a period of major disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Their combined efforts will quite literally set the platform for military aviation for decades to come.

Finally, our Defence Aviation Rules system will successfully position us against international best practice and instil and support a continuous improvement mind-set that we know is inherent in all military aviators.

Our challenge is to now embrace this way of thinking, to take ownership of our future and be comfortable that we're on the right path to successfully navigate the "turbulence" typical in our business.

**B | WING COMMANDER
Y | HILTON BAKER**

This month we celebrate the achievement of a significant milestone on our journey towards the RNZAF of the future – the successful introduction of a contemporary aviation system underpinned by new Defence Aviation Rules.

These background changes, for operators and maintainers alike, represent an evolution rather than revolution in the way we do business by aligning us to international best practice and giving us a solid framework and tools to continuously improve. To be honest, it's not a sexy topic and the majority of you won't see anything different in how we do military aviation, but this is exactly how it should be!

So rather than bore you with talk that excites only the most socially inept of us, can I offer a couple of insights from the change programme that have RNZAF-wide application.

Now, more than ever, we have to "work smarter and not harder" which requires us all to think carefully about what our core role should be and how we best perform it. While rolling our sleeves up and getting stuck into a job is admirable, so too is time spent beforehand considering how it could be accomplished more efficiently.

Time spent "on" the business (improving processes, thinking ahead, etc.) can be as valuable as time spent "in" the business (doing the task) – the trick here is finding the right balance.

Tied into this for leaders is the awareness that bureaucracies such as ours have a way of generating work out of thin air and therefore being careful that we keep ourselves and our teams focused on those things that are truly important.

Despite the high standards that we in Defence hold ourselves to, there's a need to find where "good enough" sits. I'm not advocating any form of laziness, carelessness, or unsafe practice, but rather a recognition of when we're tending to "gold-plate" our work (seeking perfection) or overachieving.

This could be anything from the continual reworking of correspondence until all minor errors have been remedied, or consistently staying late at work to get "just one more" task done. Two adages apply here: 80% on time is better than 100% too late, and pulling your hand out of a bucket of water leaves no hole – overachieving can merely hide organisational deficiencies.

Our contemporary aviation system demands a change in thinking, like the areas above, in order to lead us in the direction of improved efficiency, maximised availability, and enhanced outputs. The change pain of the past few years is now starting to ease and the future looks brighter as a result. For those of you who were disappointed that this article didn't delve into the nuances of Defence Aviation Rules, give me a bell and we'll catch up for a coffee, stare at our shoes and talk some more!