

HGFA General Manager's Report

Hang Gliding Worlds – August 2007

The next big event on the international calendar is the 16th FAI World Hang Gliding Championship to be held in Big Springs, Texas during August this year.

Australia will be represented by a team of six hang gliding pilots who will be defending our Worlds Team title, won during the 2005 Worlds at Hay, NSW. The team will vary a little from that in Hay with Jonny Durand Jnr, David Seib, Steve Moyes, and Kraig Coomber as returning veterans and Scott Barrett and Chris Jones new to the team. Steve Moyes continues to hold his own, being the only pilot to attend all 16 World Championships.

As always, our National team needs your support. Please contact Vicki Moyes (02 9316 4644) for any contribution you can offer to help the team cover travel, accommodation and tow fees while at this competition.

What's In A Name?

The HGFA web forum has received a number of posts regarding a name change proposal for the association. The proposal comes as our membership trends away from hang gliding, with the current majority of our membership made up of paraglider pilots. Weightshift microlights also constitute a portion of our membership as does a slow, but steadily growing, group of pilots who solely fly motorised variations of paragliders and/or motorised hang gliders.

The time is certainly ripe for discussion on this subject. As noted on the forum, other similar organisations have altered their name to better reflect their membership and perhaps the HGFA needs to do the same, bearing in mind, that our organisation does cater for a wider scope of aircraft and operations than those organisations named on the forum.

Our operations are ever-developing in their diversity and therefore any name replacing our current one, needs to be considerate of the entire membership.

Thought is also required for the manner in which we are to continue as an organisation, whether we call it (and indeed structure it as) a Federation or an Association. The difference here is much to do with the extent of involvement at State level as opposed to a central office. Currently we run as a crossbreed of these organisational definitions, with the State bodies controlling regional site development while a National body oversees the operational context of the organisation.

Consideration should be given to Brett Coupland's comments regarding clubs and the fees which are now mounting for all pilots who fly a variety of sites throughout the year. Members currently face membership fees, state

fees, motorised fees, club fees, site fees and comp fees. While I am sure most of us accept that there are supplementary costs attached to the sport and that there is a need to maintain our sites, it may just be more palatable if the overall cost was managed into one fee total through one payment portal, just as Brett describes. The forum provides an opportunity to discuss these points and put your opinion on post for others to consider. Log on, have a read and, if so compelled, place a vote on the name change proposal.

Board Nominations

Following on from the above name issue and alternate ways that the HGFA could present itself to the membership: This year is Board election year. Members should start to think about the upcoming AGM in October and the associated Board elections with a view towards making a contribution to the running of the HGFA by standing for a position on the Board.

The next two monthly issues of Soaring Australia (July and August) will include a nomination form on which members may self-nominate or make nominations of other potential (and agreeable) candidates. The forms will be received by the HGFA Office until 1 October 2007.

Nominees will need to supply a brief resume for publication in the November magazine alongside the ballot paper calling for members to make their vote before the end of December.

The elected Board will then be announced in the February magazine and the new Board members take up office during the March/April Board Planning meeting.

The Board term is two years. Being on the Board does require some commitment and members need to have a strong desire to effect a positive outcome for the HGFA in general. Please look for your Board Nomination paper in the next two issues and strongly consider how you can give back to your sport through participation as a Board member.

State Fees Increase

I have been informed by the South Australian State branch that their State levy will be increased by \$22 per South Australian member from 1 May 2007. The fee increase has become necessary to ensure SAHGA is sufficiently liquid to maintain the services it currently provides to its members.

Primarily the increase in rent for the main southerly site, Tunkalilla, will erode the modest savings SAHGA has accumulated over 30 years to a point where the State coffers will not have sufficient funds to cover the costs of first aid courses, parachute packing nights, landowner gratuities, etc.

Fire at Albion Park (WM)

Investigation is continuing into a recent fire involving an Airborne 912 XT microlight at Albion Park, NSW. The fire totally destroyed the microlight and caused significant damage to several other wings and aircraft stored in the hangar at the time. At present, there is no clear indication as to what caused the fire. The aircraft had not been flown that day and had been hangared without the wing attached.

While investigations into the cause continue, we advise that all microlight owners take precaution on how their aircraft is stored and ensuring the electric circuit is broken while the aircraft is in storage.

We will post a notice on the HGFA website with any further information about the results of this investigation.

PPG Update

Progress with the new PPG straight-through syllabus and mentor program has not been as speedy as hoped, but progress is none-the-less being made.

The PPG mentor concept has been drafted and forms have been developed for guidelines and application to be published in the near future. The PPG syllabus will be undergoing final formatting in its documentation before being submitted to the Safety & Ops panel for their review and recommendations.

In the meantime a new PPG magazine has been established online, which should provide some international discussion and resources for those with an interest in motorised paragliding [www.paramotormag.com/index.php/subscriptions].

New Instructors

I would like to welcome the following to the HGFA instructor pool:

Stuart Coad – Apprentice HG under
Tony Barton, Newcastle
Neil Evans – Apprentice HG under
Tony Barton, Newcastle
Robert Jaques – Apprentice and FEI WM
under Dave Keough, Mareeba

I would also like to welcome back Paul Coffey who is re-certifying as a WM instructor with Southwest Microlights in WA.

Accidents/ Incidents

The fundamental objective of the accident reporting requirements is the future prevention of similar type accidents and incidents. This is done by identification of the primary and secondary causes of an accident. There is no intent to allocate blame on any pilot or member reporting an accident.

Number 1

Pilot: Intermediate
Experience: 300 hours +
Aircraft type: Hang glider
Pilot injury: Nil
Bystander: Nil
Aircraft damage: Total damage
Location: Coastal
Conditions: 15kt tailwind
with light turbulence

Description:

The pilot was attempting a coastal run along the Victorian coastline from Torquay to Apollo Bay.

Pilot was flying above orographic cloud that had formed along the coast between Aireys Inlet and Cape Otway, using the cloud as a lift indicator. To make use of the lift associated with the cloud it was necessary to fly slightly above the cloud and in front of it. Along this section of coast, flying above and in front of the cloud meant losing sight of land.

After flying for some time (20 to 25 minutes) without seeing land, the pilot became concerned as to where exactly the coast was and, assuming that the cloud could only form above land, decided to spiral down in front of the cloud. On seeing the coastline some four to five kilometres to the north, the pilot attempted to fly at best glide in order to reach the coast, however, it soon became obvious that there was insufficient lift below the cloud to sustain flight long enough to reach land.

The pilot then put out some radio calls and began to prepare for a water landing – over one kilometre from shore. The pilot unzipped the harness, turned into wind and made a landing into the water. Pilot then struggled out of the leg loops while underwater. The pilot reports that the glider floated well for about 30 minutes, but then, within the space of a few minutes, sank into deep water. The harness, parachute, vario, GPS and radio sank with the glider. The pilot had retained his helmet and used this as a kind of kickboard, whilst using breaststroke kick, over the next 1.5 hours as he drifted/swam to shore. After some considerable difficulty getting through the kelp and surf, the pilot managed to make it to the beach at Skenes Creek at around 6:30pm. The pilot then walked to the public phone box and called friends to come for a retrieve.

Comment:

This is quite an amazing story when one considers how differently the outcome could have been for this pilot. The pilot has agreed to enter a more detailed article of his 'adventure' in the July edition of Soaring Australia. The pilot agrees that he made several mistakes which led to his ditching in water:

1. *Assuming that orographic cloud can only form over rising land.*

He has since learnt that the envelope of moist rising air being forced over the coastal landmass can in fact extend seaward by a kilometre or more, depending on the strength of the onshore wind.

One can often see pilots flying high and out to sea during moderate to strong wind days, as the envelope of lifting air is backed up over the rising coastal hill/cliffs.

2. *On spotting the coastline earlier, albeit momentarily through a hole in the cloud, the pilot made a decision to continue the original flight plan rather than aborting and making for a landing while land was still within reach.*
3. *The decision to continue the flight even though the pilot had lost all reference to land was made without due care and consequently, the pilot began to self doubt when land had not been seen for some 20 to 25 minutes.*

Had the pilot made better use of his instruments to establish a more informed perception of where the coastline was, he may have actually finished the run and landed safely at his planned goal.

The following link shows some footage of flying coastal orographic cloud – not of the same area as the reported flight, but it does give some idea of how this type of cloud is formed along the coastline. Take a look at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=26odE33awig].

Number 2

Pilot: WM Pilot Certificate
Experience: 230 hours +
Aircraft type: Edge X 582
Pilot injury: Nil
Bystander: Nil
Aircraft damage: Bent wing
Location: Coastal
Conditions: 5kt, light turbulence
Description:

The pilot was flying low over beach and water ponds. Pilot miscalculated height of wheels from the water. Trike's rear wheels caught the water and 'pulled' the aircraft into the pond. The wing took the force of the resulting crash, bending the leading edge.

Comment:

Complacency, overconfidence and disregard for safe height limits led this pilot to this very lucky outcome. The pilot was extremely lucky to walk away from this accident with minor damage to the aircraft (considering the only damage was to the wing's leading edge) and no physical damage to themselves.

This incident should be a reminder to pilots that minimum height limits are set for the safety of the pilot and should be adhered to. The pilot

has been reprimanded and as a result of this experience realises that his overconfidence in his flying skill has very nearly caused himself serious injury.

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