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Dick Smith

Get out of aviation before you lose everything

I'd like to re-emphasise what I've told many people and that is there is no light on the horizon and many tens of millions of dollars more is going to be lost in general aviation in this country before anything is done about it.

I've just returned from a trip in the Caravan from Bankstown to Mornington Island and back. Basically every airport is dead, I see a totally dying GA industry.

To show you how bad it is, I'm trying to get rid of my aircraft. I put the CJ3 on the market about 6 months ago when one of the aircraft of about the same hours sold for about US \$4.6 million. Since then I have reduced the price twice, now to US \$3.9 million and can't get any takers.

One of the problems is the high cost of fitting ADSB in Australia and also a flight data recorder, both unique Australian requirements. The prime reason I'm selling the aircraft is if you get a minor fault – let's say the mercury battery in the FMS goes flat, the aircraft is grounded for many weeks as Collins no longer have a presence in Australia and so the unit has to be sent to the USA for repair. This is going to happen more and more. I couldn't even get the Winslow life raft serviced here and had to spend over US \$3,000 shipping it as dangerous goods to Singapore.

I had a meeting with the Director of Aviation Safety at CASA, Mark Skidmore when he first started over a year ago and gave him a list of about 20 items, some truly simple to fix, many of which could save money for the industry. In the intervening year not one item has been addressed, I haven't even received a phone call from anyone at CASA to ask about any of the ideas.

The OneSKY project is most likely going to be a disaster with hundreds of millions of dollars being written off and charged to the industry.

The ADSB requirement for all aircraft that fly in cloud, coming in next year is unique in the world – no other country has deemed that to be affordable. It's pretty clear that Airservices under Sir Angus Houston will not budge on this mandate, even though they have maximised profits by not putting in many ADSB ground stations.

When Warren Truss actually leaves the Parliament, he'll be praised by both sides of politics on what a great person and politician he is. This will give a message to any other politician how to act in an important folio like transport.

That is do nothing.

Take my advice now and get out before you lose even more.

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