

**Rural And Regional Affairs And Transport**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates 2021 - 2022**

**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications**

**Committee Question Number: 66**

**Departmental Question Number: SQ21-000877**

**Division/Agency Name: Civil Aviation Safety Authority**

**Hansard Reference: : Spoken, Page No. 119-120 (25 October 2021)**

**Topic: CASA - SAR aircraft regulation change**

**Senator Rex Patrick asked:**

Senator PATRICK: I might go to a small issue first and then move to a slightly bigger issue. At one stage I happened to be in Arkaroola, in the middle of the sticks in South Australia, and I bumped into a pilot who suggested that CASA were considering changing the regulations in relation to SAR aircraft. Basically, in South Australia the SAR aircraft that do a lot of stuff around Adelaide are single engine. The proposed rule change was to be that those single engine aircraft could fly with crew, but the moment they got a passenger on board they would be outside of a requirement, which was then to have two engines. I want to explore whether or not that is actually being considered by CASA?

Ms Spence: At that level of detail, I'm not too sure whether Mr Monahan has any background on that in relation to our new flight operations regulations, and whether it's related to that or not. Otherwise we can take it on notice.

Mr Monahan: If I understand your question, it's around search and rescue helicopters. I would perhaps need some more detail. There is a question of the dwell time you have in the area where you're hovering, your inability to recover if there's an engine failure or have enough power to recover the aircraft. It would depend on the circumstances and the aircraft itself. With more detail I could provide more.

Senator PATRICK: The aircraft that I've seen look like an Iroquois style aircraft—single engine, red and white, and fly regularly out of the RRA.

Mr Monahan: I'd be happy to look into it. I don't know the specifications of the aircraft or the loading.

Senator PATRICK: If you could take that on notice in the context of South Australian aircraft. They have clearly been operating safely for some period of time. If you are going to change a regulation that in some way would require them to upgrade to a twin-engine aircraft, that is a costly proposition. I'd like to know the rationale behind the change and how you have come to the conclusion that operations that have been occurring quite safely are no longer safe. I only know that in the context of South Australia. I think most SAR aircraft, Westpac and so forth, are all twin-engine.

Ms Spence: I think it will tie in with the new flight operation regulations that come into

effect later on this year. But, as Mr Monahan said, we'll get some detail and come back to you on notice.

**Answer:**

Search and Rescue (SAR) activities are regulated predominantly in Part 138 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR). Part 138 is an element of the Flight Operations Regulations which commence on 2 December 2021.

Part 138 provides risk-based requirements for aviation activities that range from the simple visual search to more complex operations such as a winch recovery.

In some areas Part 138 takes a more risk-based approach, based on industry input, and allows activities that would have otherwise been prohibited under the current rule set. An example of the risk-based approach is where Part 138 does not prevent the operation of single engine aircraft for SAR activities. For example, operating today under the night visual flight rules and carrying a passenger requires a twin-engine aircraft. Whereas Part 138 allows the carriage of up to two aerial work passengers in a single engine aircraft at night with additional risk mitigation.

The South Australia Government Attorney General's Department, South Australian State Rescue Helicopter Service (SRHS) has been engaged proactively in discussions with CASA on a number of occasions during the development of Part 138, the development of Part 133 and the future heliport standards under consideration.