Supplementary Submission Mick Quinn

I make the following comments in response to CASA's supplementary submission. I thank CASA for their comments and the Committee for the opportunity to respond. My response is in the interests of aviation safety. I am surprised regarding the tone of the response from CASA and aim to focus on the issue of the Norfolk Island accident rather than enter into a public exchange on a personal level.

General Remarks

CASA states:
2.1 CASA does not question Mr Quinn's credentials and qualifications as an aviation safety advisor with considerable experience. However, we find it passing strange that Mr Quinn fails to mention in his submission that he served as CASA's Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Operations from December 2007 until June 2009, and as CASA's Deputy Director from July 2009 until he separated from CASA in January 2010.[1]

I have made it clear to the Committee in camera regarding my position at CASA and the timings of my tenure. This included my first contact with Mr James in a professional capacity, months after the accident and my voluntary departure from CASA in January 2010. I'm more than happy to have that evidence made public.

CASA states:
2.2 This is important because, during the whole of Mr Quinn's tenure at CASA, he held the most senior position in the Authority, below that of the Director of Aviation Safety, with responsibility for what today constitutes CASA's Operations division. In that position, Mr Quinn himself would have had penultimate accountability for any alleged shortcomings or deficiencies in CASA's safety oversight functions in relation to Pel-Air during an extended period of time prior to the accident, and for a shorter period of time after the accident.

There is an inference here I was avoiding responsibility. I object to this inference. Aviation safety is about accepting responsibility, facts and improving the system. Had the ATSB report highlighted deficiencies in the system that were evident at the time of my tenure, I would have accepted and adopted any recommendations. I am very cognisant that aviation safety is not about blame.

CASA states:
2.3 In light of the 20-year personal relationship Mr Quinn acknowledges he has had with Mr James, CASA believes questions may fairly be raised about Mr Quinn's ability to maintain an appropriate measure of objectivity and professional detachment in relation to his assessment and analysis of aspects of the issues canvassed in his submission. Such questions, CASA submits, are at least as deserving of consideration as are Mr Quinn's unsubstantiated and frankly offensive suggestions of a collusive relationship between CASA and the ATSB.

I reject this inference of my impartiality. Additionally, considering the evidence now available, I believe there are strong grounds to support my opinion. In my submission I stated "The content of this report leads me to form the opinion that agencies and organisations may have colluded internally or together, for reasons unknown to produce

this report." I did not write that it was specifically between the ATSB and CASA. That is their comment.

CASA states:

2.6 As readily as Mr Quinn is inclined to press an organisational analysis into service in this particular case, conveniently shunting responsibility away from his friend, Mr James, and towards Pel-Air, CASA and the Bureau of Meteorology, he has been quite prepared in at least one other recent case to effectively turn this kind of analysis 'on its head', in support of the air service provider that had engaged his services as an expert in that instance, Avtex Air Services Pty Ltd (Avtex).

I'm not sure what the Avtex case has to do with this accident. I can only assume it is an attempt to discredit my character. Also, these comments are selective and taken out of context. My analysis of Avtex was conducted after the accident and after key post holders had been removed from the organisation, including the Chief Pilot (unlike with Pel-Air). My assessment was based on a detailed corrective action plan and interviews with the new Chief Pilot and owner. I disagree that interviewing staff who no longer worked for the organisation would have provided any relevance as to the new regime and future of the safety culture at Avtex to get it operational again.

Specific Responses

In Section 3 of the CASA response, they object repeatedly to my comments regarding the analysis I put forward using the Reason model and other contemporary safety tools. Rather than responding to each line in a tit-for-tat exchange I will happily review the Hansard and my submission and advise the Committee of any corrections, as per the laid out Senate process. CASA have made significant errors in their verbal testimony, however rather than highlighting that here, I'll have the professional decency to let them make their own corrections.

Regards
Mick Quinn