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Newsletter from The Commercial Aviation Association of Southern Africa NPC

From our CEO

From industry's perspective, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) has struggled to implement regulatory management principles effectively. Although it prevailed legally in a recent lawsuit against industry, the outcome reflected legal procedural correctness rather than substantive regulatory success in change management, balanced oversight, and sectoral collaboration.

The judgment revealed a significant gap between the industry's expectations and the regulator's actions. It highlighted a stark and nonsensical approach to the 12-year rule compared to almost all other countries and underscored the lack of analysis, empirical evidence, and economic considerations.

In some circles, there are figures of a 1.9-billion-rand negative revaluation of the general aviation sector, with no consideration of the 18-year safety record concerning maintenance on condition, when implementing their regulation stands out starkly. The regulator had the unique opportunity to develop with the industry a program to incorporate ongoing airworthiness aligned with the world's best practices and afforded in leading aviation countries. Yet, it reneged on this for a simplistic, "do what the OEMs say" approach.

Many local and international experts view Regulatory Management of Change in South African General Aviation as a weak point, closely tied to how industry planning must incorporate changes.

Balancing economics, safety, and risk-based oversight in an era of legal tension isn't ideal. Still, it starts to feel normal when the regulator consults publicly while secretly pursuing an internal plan that excludes industry partners.

Cont.



IN THIS ISSUE

[AAD2026
UPDATE](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[MEMBER'S NEWS](#)

[AFFILIATE PARTNER
PROFILE](#)

[AFFILIATE PARTNER
PRESIDENT](#)



Lead Partner

The legal judgment is interesting and should embarrass the regulator, noting that they have not proved any merit in their actions to date.

General aviation (GA) in South Africa remains one of the most dynamic and diverse segments of the national aviation system – encompassing flight training, agricultural operations, tourism, charter services, and recreational flying. Yet, the same diversity that makes GA vibrant makes it challenging to regulate effectively. Instead of diverting and delegating, the regulator seeks micromanagement-level control, which never delivers growth or trust.

Managing regulatory change in this sector requires an adaptive, transparent, and data-driven approach that balances safety imperatives with economic realities and the characteristics of South Africa's ageing fleet. This clearly did not happen in the 12-year rule, and there has been much "after the horse has bolted scurrying" to validate the poor decision.

Recent legal developments, including the South African Civil Aviation Authority's (SACAA) so-called "victory" in a high-profile lawsuit, have brought this tension into sharp relief. While the regulator succeeded on procedural and legal grounds, the judgment did not vindicate its performance on the substantive merits of regulatory management. The court's decision affirmed that SACAA acted within the letter of the law. Still, industry consensus suggests that it failed to act in the spirit of collaborative, risk-based regulation that the sector desperately needs.

South Africa's general aviation sector has long faced structural headwinds: older airframes, constrained maintenance capacity, rising costs, and a regulatory environment that often shifts faster than operators can adapt. These challenges demand a management-of-change (MoC) framework that is inclusive, evidence-based, and proportionate. The regulator has clearly shown no MoC in its decision-making process, which is also a stark contrast to what it expects and audits with operators in the industry.

Change management in aviation regulation is not simply about rewriting rules. It is about ensuring that every change, whether in maintenance standards, licensing procedures, or oversight models, is absorbed effectively by those it affects. It must be predictable, economically feasible, and clearly communicated. When regulators fail to meet these conditions, they compromise compliance, erode trust, and weaken overall safety outcomes.

In recent years, the regulator has worked hard to damage trust and has arguably showcased dictatorial decisions because "they are the regulator" and "it is their right."

In the South African context, this process failure has been evident in recent years and is seen internationally despite favourable showings at ICAO.

Without a vibrant aviation industry in South Africa, we will not be able to afford and remain relevant. The SACAA's approach to new regulatory requirements and oversight adjustments has too often been reactive, opaque, or inconsistent, leaving operators uncertain about compliance expectations and timelines.

Could the lessons from the Lawsuit be Legal Victory, Policy Defeat?

Those who look between the lines and have a macro view should be seriously concerned.

While the recent court case between SACAA and key industry stakeholders was decided in the regulator's favour, it exposed a deeper systemic issue. The regulator secured the legal victory by correctly following the statutory steps required under the Civil Aviation Act. Yet the case also highlighted that many of SACAA's regulatory actions lacked factual and consultative grounding, as well as practical proportionality.

Stakeholders argued that the Authority had introduced or enforced changes without meaningful engagement or adequate transitional planning, undermining operational stability and safety outcomes. The court found that SACAA had acted lawfully but did not find that the changes were effective, data-driven, or well-managed in the MoC sense.

In short, SACAA won the case but lost the argument. The judgment underscores a well-known truth to regulators worldwide: legality does not equal legitimacy. Aviation safety oversight must be transparent, evidence-based, and participatory to be trusted and effective.

The regulator is following a trajectory where they divest any risk to the owner-operator or OEM, which is unacceptable when we pay them for service.

There must be a balance between safety and economics – this is the missing equilibrium.

A well-functioning regulatory system recognises that safety and economic sustainability are two sides of the same coin. If regulators impose rules that operators can't afford to implement, those rules will eventually break down in practice. And when operators cut corners just to stay afloat, safety inevitably suffers.

In South Africa, many GA operators work with ageing aircraft and limited financial margins. Prescriptive, costly requirements, often introduced without adequate industry consultation or phased transition periods, have strained this balance.

A practical management-of-change approach would prioritise cost-benefit alignment, ensuring that interventions yield measurable safety gains relative to their economic impact. Instead, SACAA's recent regulatory posture has leaned toward a compliance-first mentality, with limited flexibility or proportionality for smaller operators.

This rigidity risks driving compliant operations out of the regulated sphere, undermining the safety goals the Authority seeks to uphold.

When the regulator—who safeguards Safety Data and Risk-Based Oversight—ignores these founding Principles, catastrophic consequences follow, and operators only recognise the damage years later.

The international regulatory trend, from ICAO's frameworks to EASA and FAA models, is toward risk-based oversight (RBO). This approach uses data to target oversight and enforcement where risk is most significant, rather than applying uniform scrutiny across all operators regardless of size or activity.

South Africa has the data infrastructure to support such a model if it were to embrace it. The GA community is relatively contained, and associations such as BARSa, AASA, CAASA, and the Aero Club already collect valuable safety and operational data. However, despite repeated calls from industry bodies, SACAA has struggled to implement a coherent, transparent risk-based oversight system. They also regularly dispute data developed or obtained for various associations and bodies. Instead, the position should be to act in partnership, recognising that where there is smoke, there may be fire. The industry raises it only when it's crucial and demands attention.

Oversight focuses heavily on administrative compliance rather than measured safety performance indicators such as defect recurrence, maintenance trends, or incident precursors. Operators report that audits often feel punitive rather than developmental, a symptom of a compliance culture rather than a safety culture.

Older Fleets and Continuing Airworthiness remain a Critical Test that the regulator has, at this juncture, failed, despite three years of box-ticking.

Older aircraft can remain safe and reliable when well-maintained. However, they require tailored inspection regimes, component monitoring, and flexible maintenance pathways that account for both risk and cost. In other jurisdictions, regulators have introduced programmes for Ageing Aircraft Management, allowing for alternative compliance and enhanced inspection schedules instead of rigid retrofit mandates.

SACAA's current airworthiness oversight approach has not consistently incorporated such flexibility. The lack of published guidance on alternative means of compliance (AMOCs) (in reality, the rejections speak volumes), the limited consultation on technical directives, and delays in approving maintenance data for legacy aircraft, all hinder ongoing airworthiness management and place unnecessary pressure on both owners and maintenance organisations.

A Path Forward to restore balance despite the current regulatory tensions requires a constructive approach. The regulator has to show a different attitude to its clients and ultimately the funders of their organisation and their employment.

Cont.

South Africa's GA community has deep expertise and a proven record of collaboration, through initiatives such as Safety-First Aviator, Mayday-SA, and various industry-led safety campaigns. These frameworks show that partnership, not prescription, delivers lasting safety gains.

To rebuild trust and improve outcomes, SACAA should commit to the following principles:

1. **Transparent Management of Change:** All regulatory amendments or procedural changes should follow a published MoC process with clear impact assessments, timelines, and industry feedback mechanisms.
2. **Proportionate, Risk-Based Oversight:** Apply oversight intensity relative to operational complexity and risk exposure, freeing regulatory resources to focus on higher-risk activities.
3. **Economic Feasibility Assessments:** Integrate cost-benefit analysis into regulatory planning to ensure that safety improvements are economically sustainable.
4. **Stakeholder Partnerships:** Institutionalise meaningful (and not merely tickbox) structured dialogue between SACAA, CAASA, AeCSA, and maintenance organisations – not as ad hoc consultations but as standing committees within the rulemaking and oversight process.
5. **Data Transparency:** Publish anonymised safety trend data and oversight metrics to encourage collaborative learning rather than fear-based compliance.

Winning in Court yet Losing in Practice with the industry's predictive loss cannot be the legacy this regulatory regime desires, as it would mark a not-so-shining moment and damage the other good things it has achieved.

South Africa's general aviation sector cannot afford a regulatory environment where compliance becomes a contest of endurance rather than a partnership for safety. SACAA's recent courtroom win affirms its authority under law. Still, it also underscores a disconnect between legal compliance and regulatory effectiveness.

We measure true regulatory success not by legal victories, but by building a safer, more sustainable, and economically viable aviation community. To achieve that, SACAA must evolve from a regulator that enforces to one that manages change, collaboratively, transparently, and in genuine partnership with the community it oversees.



Kev Storie - CAASA CEO



Commercial Aviation Association
of Southern Africa NPC



2026 Lead Partner

Your Aviation Partner

OUR AFFILIATE PARTNERS



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Come Fly with Us

At CAASA we remain invested in *your* success.

To that end, CAASA would like to support our valued member's endeavours by offering the opportunity to participate and contribute to our monthly newsletters in the months ahead.

All we need is:

1. Your company logo (JPG or PDF)
2. Your company overview, along with the products and/or services you offer (long short form)
3. Share any significant milestones (again, long or short form and any supporting visuals (JPG or PDF) – Optional
4. All your contact details, including your website and social media links.

Do this, and we'll rack and stack your contribution for inclusion. We'll also share the final copy and the laid-out page(s) with you for review and approval before publication.

Get involved and reap the benefits of getting your business in front of curated, aviation-focused peers pro bono!

Reach out to our General Manager, Melissa Sewgolam (melissa@caasa.co.za) and she'll make sure your voice is heard amongst our fellow members and beyond.

With 80 years of legacy and reputation, your contribution can only help us foster growth in your business and across our critically important aviation sector.



AAD TURNS 25 YEARS

Transport Month: **TOGETHER WE MOVE SOUTH** **AFRICA FORWARD**

As we celebrate Transport Month in October, we are reminded that our transport system shapes not just our daily lives, but our entire landscape of South Africa's defence industries. Transport goes far beyond only moving people between locations. It is the backbone of our defence economy. Transport plays a vital role in the defence sector, forming the foundation of military mobility, logistics and operational readiness. It ensures that personnel, equipment and essential supplies are moved efficiently through air, land, and sea to support missions, safeguard borders, and respond swiftly to national and regional challenges.

Transport is a strategic enabler that strengthens the coordination, resilience and capability of the armed forces. From airlift operations and armoured vehicle convoys to naval logistics support, transport systems ensure our defence forces remain swift.

At the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition, the significance of transport is clearly reflected across the aerospace, maritime and land mobility sectors. AAD serves as a collaborative platform where industry leaders, defence forces, and innovators showcase technologies that enhance the nation's transport and defence capabilities.

AAD exemplifies how transport and defence work hand in hand to promote progress, security, and innovation. The exhibition unites the public and private sectors in advancing the shared goal of a safer, stronger, and more connected South Africa, demonstrating that collective effort and innovation truly drive the nation forward.





Africa Aerospace and Defence IS SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

The African defence and aerospace market continues to expand rapidly, driving innovation, partnerships, and economic growth across the continent. With South Africa leading the way, the future of aerospace and defence isn't just coming, it's already here.



With over 350 exhibitors anticipated to participate at AAD 2026, the stage is set for Africa's premier defence and aerospace expo. From global manufacturers and defence forces to innovators and solution providers, the world's leading companies are coming together to forge partnerships, demonstrate cutting-edge technology, and shape the future of defence and aviation.

Whether you're introducing new technologies, seeking partnerships, or exploring opportunities in Africa's defence landscape, AAD is where innovation meets collaboration on a global stage.

The exhibition space at AAD2026 is now over 50% sold. Take advantage of our extended early bird rate and secure your spot today.



Opportunities to Spotlight YOUR BRAND AT AAD2026

Your exhibition stand is just one part of your AAD journey and we know how important it is to maximise your investment and visibility. So, how can we help you make the most of it?

Exclusively available to AAD exhibitors, we offer a range of sponsorship and branding opportunities, both digital and on-site, designed to put your brand in front of the right audience. Whether you want to enhance your presence, generate valuable leads, drive engagement, or strengthen industry connections, our tailored packages can be customised to meet your business goals and budget.

Act quickly and explore the packages available below.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)





GOOD LUCK, CLASS OF 2025!

The AAD team wishes all students the very best for your final exams. Your hard work today builds South Africa's future. 🌟

Dream big with the Youth Development Programme (YDP) at #AAD2026:

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)

Important dates TO KEEP IN MIND!

To make it easier for our exhibitors to plan their participation at AAD 2026, please see below for an easy breakdown of important dates.

16 - 18 SEPT 2026

TRADE DAYS & CONFERENCING

19 - 20 SEPT 2026

PUBLIC AIR SHOW DAYS

EARLY BIRD RATES VALID UNTIL 31 OCTOBER 2025

**STAY TUNED TO OUR SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS
FOR UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS!**





Industry News

ARMSCOR – AND SADI – LOOKING EAST FOR COLLABORATION

In addition to seeking partnerships in Africa, Armscor has reached out to the Far East, specifically Japan, for potential collaboration in the defence and related industries.

[READ MORE](#)



Industry News

EX VUK'UHLOME PREPARATIONS ON TRACK

Planning and preparation continues apace at the SA Army Combat Training Centre (CTC) ahead of Exercise Vuk'uhlome. The CTC at Lohatlha in the Northern Cape province is a hive of activity encompassing fitness and shooting as well as peripheral knowledge impartment to soldiers from, among others, the air defence, artillery, armour, engineer, infantry and signals formations.

[READ MORE](#)



Official Notice

Annual General Meeting

Date: Tuesday, 25 November 2025

Time: 10am

Hosted virtually, via **Microsoft Teams**

Member's News

**Let us take a moment to acknowledge
the tragic passing of Gavin Kiggen.**

**We thank him for his invaluable
contribution to CAASA and the overall
aviation industry.**

**Our heartfelt condolences to his family,
friends, and colleagues.**

May he rest in peace.



Member's News

FAREWELL TO A TRAILBLAZER: – Mary Stephens' Enduring Contribution to Aviation

By World Airnews



At CAASA, we recently had the privilege of hosting a farewell for Mary Stephens, Senior Manager: Consistency and Standardisation at the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA). The gathering at CAASA House brought together friends, colleagues, and industry partners who came to thank Mary for her many years of dedication and to celebrate the remarkable difference she has made in South African aviation.

Building Bridges and Finding Solutions

Throughout her career, Mary has been a calm and steady voice in an industry that often balances competing priorities. Where regulation and industry sometimes meet in tension, Mary's approach has always been to listen, open dialogue, and find common ground.

Those who have worked alongside her spoke of her tireless commitment — often well beyond working hours — and of her determination to find solutions that strengthen aviation safety without losing sight of the people behind the processes.

As one colleague said on the day, “You’ve gone above and beyond time and again. Your insight, professionalism, and fairness have helped protect and advance our industry.”

A Pioneer in a Changing Industry

Mary began her aviation journey in air traffic control, at a time when few women entered that demanding field. With quiet determination and exceptional skill, she rose through the ranks to become a respected figure at the SACAA and a trusted counterpart across the aviation sector.

Her colleagues describe her as a “statesman for the industry” — someone whose deep knowledge and balanced judgement have helped navigate challenging regulatory landscapes. Firm but fair, Mary earned respect not through authority alone, but through integrity and consistency.

Shaping Both Policy and People

Mary's influence has extended beyond policy and regulation to the many professionals she has mentored and inspired. Her willingness to share knowledge, her patience, and her belief in the potential of others have left a lasting impact on those who've had the privilege of working with her.

As one tribute captured it: “Your sense of fairness hasn't just shaped systems — it's shaped people. Many of us are better at what we do because of you.”

A Lasting Impact

As Mary steps into the next chapter of her life, the aviation community she has helped guide and strengthen will continue to benefit from her example. She leaves behind stronger relationships, sounder processes, and a generation of professionals shaped by her fairness and wisdom.

From all of us at CAASA, we extend our deepest thanks to Mary for her many years of service, collaboration, and leadership. Her contribution has made the aviation industry — and all of us who work within it — better.

We wish her clear skies ahead and the same smooth journeys she has worked so hard to create for others.

Friends and associates gathered at CAASA House to bid farewell to Mary Stephens, whose contribution to aviation, as one colleague put it, “cannot be measured in policies alone. It is seen in the bridges she built, the solutions she created, and the inspiration she gave to others.”
Images by: Pieter Cronjé (WAN), Johan Lottering and Hanke Fourie.



Affiliate Partner Profile



EST: 2013

THE COMMERCIAL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN

AFRICA's purpose is to represent members with commercial interests of Operators and related parties at local, national and regional levels.

We provide a platform for all members of the commercial unmanned aviation industry to voice their concerns and participate in the sector's affairs. CUAASA is actively involved in regulatory amendments related specifically to Part 101 and its associated training parts.

Our next focus area will be to begin engagements with the SACAA regarding Part 102, effective in the 2026 Financial Year.

CUAASA believes that growth in this market will be the next challenge in aviation and of fundamental importance for the Southern African continent. Our goal is to ensure that the future benefits of unmanned aerial systems for the Southern African continent are fully understood, accepted by all, and supported by industry and government.

Many perceptions, fears, misunderstandings, and archaic ideas and viewpoints need to be changed to move into the next aviation dimension.

For membership details, please contact our General Manager,
Melissa Sewgolam at: melissa@caasa.co.za

Meet Our Affiliate Partner President

Each month, we introduce you to the members of our CAASA Board and Council to give you context as to their qualification and overall commitment to our vital sector.

This month, we welcome our **CUAASA President and CAASA Council Member, Sean Reitz.**



Born in May 1970, Sean Reitz is a Cape Town-based entrepreneur whose career reflects a passion for innovation, leadership, and adventure.

Originally from Johannesburg, Sean matriculated from Roosevelt High School in 1987 before completing his National Service with South Africa's elite 1 Parachute Battalion. He went on to study Marketing and Economics at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), establishing a strong foundation for his future business ventures.

Sean's entrepreneurial journey began in 1998 when he founded RCA, a leading medical equipment provider to the hospital industry. Under his leadership, the company grew into a respected player in South Africa's healthcare market and was later acquired by Ascendis Health, a JSE-listed entity, in 2015. Sean exited the business in 2016.

That same year, he launched the Drone Ops Group, a pioneering commercial drone holding company focused on security, mining, and aerial innovation. The group's portfolio includes:

- **RPAS Academy** – a CAA-accredited drone training institution with facilities in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Durban.
- **DroneCon** – South Africa's premier drone industry conference which was first hosted in 2017.
- **Drone Ops** – a licensed drone operator and PSIRA member.
- **Advanced Aerial** – specialising in mining and security applications.

Sean's industry involvement extends well beyond his own enterprises. He serves as President of CUAASA (the Commercial Unmanned Aerial Association of South Africa) and Chair of DroneCon, where he actively promotes responsible drone integration and technological advancement. A sought-after speaker on drone innovation, he continues to shape discourse in the commercial UAV space.

A long-standing member of the Entrepreneurs' Organisation (EO) since 2011, Sean also contributes as a coach within EO Accelerator. His prior leadership roles include Vice President of SAMED (the South African Medical Device Association) and Vice President of SEFAC (the Southern Equatorial Ferrari Automobile Club).

Outside of business, Sean channels his energy into adventure. A licensed private helicopter pilot, he finds inspiration in travel, food, and exploration. His pursuits include trail running, motor racing, and endurance challenges such as completing the Dakar Rally in 2016, where he finished 36th, and crossing the desert on foot.

Driven, versatile, and forward-thinking, Sean Reitz embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that bridges business innovation with personal adventure.

