

## **NZ gliding conference – June 2019.**

### **Women in aviation – why aren't there more?**

Thank you so much for the invitation to speak.

I have a terrible confession to make especially to this group, and that is I've never been in a glider!! Though having already admitted that to a couple here, looks like I'll be calling into the Wellington club in Greytown when I'm next passing through.

The NZAWA has just had its own rally weekend in Omaka, over Queen's Birthday weekend. Though the weather caused some issues for people flying in, alternative arrangements were made, and we ended up having over 80 people registered, with 60 of those being members.

Firstly, I'd like to acknowledge one of your own who was awarded the NZ Order of Merit last weekend, Yvonne Loader. It was an absolute privilege to have her with us last weekend and be able to celebrate this phenomenal achievement. She is an inspirational woman within aviation, and for her to be recognised on this level is fantastic.

A little about me! I grew up on a farm in Castlepoint, a small East coast community in the Wairarapa. I had my heart set on becoming a pilot from a very young age and after doing a deal with Dad over passing my 5<sup>th</sup> form exams, I did a few flying lessons in Hood Aerodrome as a teenager. In 2004, I started flying school in Tauranga and went on to work at the school as an instructor, eventually completely my multi-engine instructors and B-cat. In 2007 I was given the opportunity to live and fly in Vanuatu, and then chasing a bit more multi flying I headed to Australia. In 2010 Jetstar employed me on the Airbus A320 out for Auckland, and in 2016 I made the move across to Air New Zealand. I am currently a Second Officer on the Boeing 787 for Air NZ, a position that sees me all over Asia and North America. As the current president of the NZ Association of Women in Aviation, I am passionate about getting more women into the industry.

The topic I'm going to speak on, "Women in Aviation – why aren't there more?", is huge and incredibly loaded. Gender equality in all businesses, the #MeToo movement, the gender pay gap etc., are all hot topics, getting people into hotter water. So, I think it is important that I make my stance very clear from the very beginning. I am 100%, unequivocally, opposed to any form of "female quota"! This is in aviation and any other industry. The moment the requirements are different for men and women the 'gap' only gets bigger. The best person must get the position, based on their qualifications, experience, and personality, not gender, race or sexual persuasion.

So why aren't there more women in aviation? To begin, I want to discuss some barriers for young people coming into aviation, and then finish by highlighting some things that I have experienced being a woman in this industry.

Young girls these days know very well that they can grow up to be anything they want. The social acceptance of women in all industries has changed significantly from 50yrs ago. So many of the barriers I see aren't just for young women, they apply equally to young men. There are four that I think are important to look at, money, time, accessibility and relevance.

In discussing each of these, I also see these as barriers of us, as small GA associations, in getting young people to join and stay.

Money...

Learning to fly is EXPENSIVE!! Even from when I started 15yrs ago, costs per hour have nearly doubled. Combine this with living costs in many cities, the average income of newly minted CPL pilots, and aviation isn't all that attractive.

Another aspect of this is parents concern over career pathways for their kids going into aviation, I've seen a lot of this speaking at careers days. They want to make sure their children are entering a career that will see them making a good income, early on, which isn't the case usually within aviation.

Finally, under money, is us, as organisations. We have running costs, we can't lower our fees any more than we probably already have. Many clubs are pushed financially as it is.

Time...

No different to many of us, young people are time poor. School days seem longer, homework due is almost incompletable, and sports practises and games take up so much time. This makes it hard for young people to find the time to give up their weekends to be part of our clubs and organisations.

On the other side of this, is our time. NZ gliding, much like the NZAWA runs on volunteer's hard work. Yes, we all love being involved but many of us still work full time, have families, etc.. Finding time to get out and talk in schools sometimes impossible.

Accessibility...

Accessibility to our fly-ins, our hubs. The NZAWA annual rally must be held at small airfields, no way is Wellington Airport going to allow us to set up a grid and have people walking all over movement areas! This forced isolation can be an added deterrent for young people getting involved.

Making our associations more accessible online - websites/social media - is changing the way we operate. We can get a lot more reach, and with online payment functions we can sign new recruits up on the spot. But this ties into the previous two barriers. Websites need money to create, and websites and social media platforms require time to ensure they are up to date and relevant.

Relevance...

Why join NZAWA? Why join gliding NZ? We joined, why aren't they? Can I honestly say that being a member of NZAWA has made me a better pilot, or helped me in my career? Professionally probably not, personally in terms of friendships and support then 100% it has.

Gliding NZ is in a great position to answer this question, and differently to myself. Last weekend I overheard Yvonne speaking to one of the young members about how gliding did make you a better pilot, that it improved your judgement on approach as you can't afford to

miss your aiming point - powering up for another go simply isn't an option. This really highlights the selling point of relevance in joining a gliding club!!

Within our clubs we have a huge amount of experience that can be shared with young pilots, pilots going into any field within the industry. It is making sure we market this to young people entering the industry properly.

The next thing I'd like to touch on is some issues around being a woman in the aviation industry. To explain this further I want to bring in the term "unconscious bias". This is the current human resource management catch-phrase, with many companies running education days on the topic. To fully explain the term I want to use a few examples from my own personal life...

1. When people ask me what I do for a living, I generally answer with "I work for Air New Zealand". What do you think they immediately assume I do for Air NZ! Yup a flight attendant, never once has someone assumed I am a pilot. Often people then dive to a story about a recent flight where the flight attendants were brilliant/terrible, and I'm left nodding and figuring how to say I'm a pilot - not a flight attendant.
2. I have short hair, I fly aeroplanes, I am in my 30's and not married, and I have a firearms licence and spend the odd evening on the farm stalking deer ..... what do you think the next assumption is!?!? Yup, lesbian. The simple truth is I like my hair this way, I love my job, I haven't found anyone I can put up with (or who can put up with me..) and I grew up on a farm, hunting is something my family has done for years.
3. Our work carpark is set slightly away from the main terminal, and because of this and the fact, and we usually have a suitcase, there is a bus that takes us to the terminal. Only jet pilots can get into the carpark, the gate is opened by scanning our id cards as we drive in. There are a few times when we are required to passenger for work, so, therefore, are dressed in normal smart-casual clothing (not uniform). The last two times I have done this, I have been asked by the bus driver "are you one of the pilots?". How many of the male pilots, do you think have been asked the same question? I would say none.

This is unconscious bias at work, and I am big enough to not get offended by these comments and reply to them in a professional and kind way. What I want you to take away from these three stories, is what assumptions are you making? What conversations are you having that are being heard by young women, or in fact any women? This applies, to women as well as men. Be careful of your assumptions as they can be hurtful, and act as a strong deterrent to women joining your club.

It has been an absolute pleasure speaking to you all, and I hope I've been able to add some new ideas to the conversations you are already having. Gliding already has a strong female presence, and I only hope to see that grow!!!