

Professional and Legal Committee (PLC) Chair Report

Presented by Donna Field, Civil Air (Australia)

SUMMARY

This report outlines the activities of the Professional and Legal Committee for the 2025 to 2026 period, including the meetings held, our working program and the challenges and successes experienced during the year.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. I was elected to PLC chair at the Annual Conference in Abu Dhabi 2025, succeeding Adam Exley (UK). This report provides a summary of PLC activities for the 2025 – 2026 period. Patrica Gilbert was also elected Executive Vice President Professional (EVPP), in 2025, making this our first year working together.

2. DISCUSSION**2.1. The Committee**

- 2.1.1. The committee elected in 2025 consisted of members from the following twelve Member Associations (MAs):

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|----------------|-----------------|
| - South Africa | - United States |
| - Netherlands | - Japan |
| - Romania | - Spain |
| - Italy | - Jamaica |
| - Greece | - Canada |
| - Nigeria | - Mexico |

- 2.1.2. We also had a huge show of interest from individuals at the conference seeking to participate in the PLC as a corresponding member. In total PLC membership consisted of about 45 individuals, some more active contributors than others. The PLC hive mind on its “WhatsApp” group was drawn upon on many occasions for discussion and comparison of issues and procedures. It is an invaluable resource.

2.2. PLC Meetings

- 2.2.1. The two PLC meetings took place in Amsterdam, Netherlands (28–30 October 2025) and Manila, Philippines (20–22 January 2026). Both

meetings were conducted jointly and included an overlapping day to facilitate joint sessions with the Technical Operations Committee (TOC).

- 2.2.2. Attendance for the Manila meeting was lower than expected, with only 6 of the 12 elected members able to attend, mostly due to roster availability or training and work commitments.
- 2.2.3. The scheduling of the meeting is a significant factor affecting the attendance of the committee members. It is a difficult balance to determine a suitable date and location that does not conflict with the October regional meetings; that we rotate through the regions and that we go somewhere that is accessible and within the committee budget constraints.
- 2.2.4. We have discussed the location for the upcoming meetings to be held in 2026/2027. At this stage we are considering Santiago Chile for the PLC, just prior to the Americas Regional Meeting October 2026.

2.3. Working Program

- 2.3.1. The working program for the year comprised a mix of topics, carried from the previous year, task arising from the conference floor and job card submissions.
- 2.3.2. PLC are delivering 5 standalone papers at conference, covering the following topics
 - CO2 and non-CO2 Trajectory optimisation
 - Outsourcing training
 - Misuse of Substances in ATC
 - Operational duties following Simulator sessions
 - ATC in conflict zones
- 2.3.3. Three papers were removed from the working program and will not be delivered this year. The study into “what is a break” concluded that no additional value could be added to the previous year's work. Our research on accident investigations led to the update of guidance material and it was determined that a working paper to change policy was not required. The topic of deskilling of ATCOs was unable to be completed and will be considered in next year's working program.
- 2.3.4. PLC had oversight papers authored by TOC to help provide input on matters that touched on legal considerations. These topics were space debris and IFR aircraft in uncontrolled airspace. We also sat in and provided feedback on the GNSS topic when it was necessary. In addition, three papers were coauthored by members of both PLC TOC:
 - Autonomous aircraft operations,
 - a Review of the policies relating to ATFM and
 - Ambient workplace recordings.

2.4. Work program for the coming year

- 2.4.1. During the PLC meetings and broader discussions, several topics have come up that we can see that would benefit from further study and research.

- 2.4.2. The topics of ATC in conflict areas and deskilling of ATCOs may be continued into the next working program. Other areas that have been identified is the review of the MED section of the TPM as well as a review of refreshing training. We also highlighted the need to do further study and implement policy regarding workplace and occupational safety.
- 2.4.3. PLC would also like to start working more closely with the training and the mental wellbeing task forces on some collaborative projects. These will potentially include a working paper towards policy about peer support (including in the training environment) and seeing the work through on the misuse of substances with the training taskforce to look at the creation of briefings or guidance materials.
- 2.4.4. Consideration will also be given to reducing the number of elected members to allow for the inclusion of specialists to attend the meetings from the Training and the Mental Wellbeing Task Forces.

2.5. Challenges and Successes

- 2.5.1. Co-authorship of papers remains a challenge, particularly when collaborating across time zones. Consideration will be given to allowing members to work independently on research topics, which may allow us to expand our working program.
- 2.5.2. Further work is also needed to better utilise the expertise and experience of the PLC corresponding membership team.
- 2.5.3. Personally, learning the process involved in publishing the papers and policies to wikifacta and updating the TPM involved a steep learning curve. Hopefully the task for the following years won't be as daunting.
- 2.5.4. I also learned just how important the topic selection for the working program can be. It became apparent how important preliminary research is prior to assigning a topic. It is also crucial to have a thorough, descriptive and clearly expressed job card to have a solid idea of the scope and what outcome we are working towards.
- 2.5.5. During our meeting in Manila, Mariana Hernandez (Mexico) delivered a remote briefing to the committee about utilising AI tools effectively. It was a valuable session and highlighted that consideration should be given to incorporate professional development topics to the committee meetings.

2.6. Acknowledgments

- 2.6.1. I would like to acknowledge that every member of the PLC is a volunteer, and their hard work and dedication did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Thanks go to all members who generously gave their time to research, develop, and delivering the working papers. Thank you to the corresponding members who contributed their expertise, support and valuable feedback throughout the year. I also want to acknowledge the Corresponding members who self-funded attendance at meetings.
- 2.6.2. Thank you to Vereniging het Nederlandse Luchtverkeersleiders Gilde (VNLG), The Netherlands and the Philippine Air Traffic Controllers' Association (PATCA) Philippines for hosting the combined meetings, providing site visits and introducing the committee to local food and customs.

2.6.3. Special thanks go to Rogier Hendriks, Jonne van Schaik, EVPT Benjamin van der Sanden, Renz Bulseco, Ethan Ortiz, Martin Hermosilla and Eugene Gaspan for their efforts in making our meetings such a success.

2.6.4. My sincere thanks also go to Patricia Gilbert for her leadership as EVPP; to Jaymi Steinberg for her guidance and support during my first year as Chair (and answering my endless questions), and to David Perks and Adam Exley, the previous PLC Chairs, for their mentorship and ongoing advice.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. The PLC had successful and productive year, completing the 2025 and 2026 work program. While the year was not without its challenges, particularly with both Patricia and myself new to the leadership roles of EVPP and Chair. We look forward to next year's working program and aim to build on the lessons learned during our first year.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1. This paper be accepted as information.

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