

A milestone for NZ manufacturing: 1000 aircraft from the Waikato region

A Milestone Event

On the 16th of September, celebrations were held at Hamilton International Airport to commemorate the 1000th aircraft manufactured in the Waikato region of New Zealand. This major milestone for our industry came nearly 50 years after the first plane rolled off production lines at Pacific Aerospace – the successor to one of New Zealand's first aviation companies, James Aviation.

The event was organised by the local cluster of aviation industry companies. Originally formed in 2007 as the Waikato Aviation Cluster, this group of over 50 companies has quickly extended its reach throughout New Zealand and now works alongside Aviation NZ, which has a complimentary export focus. In fact, Shaun Mitchell, GM of the Cluster also used the occasion to re-launch the organisation as the Aviation Industry Cluster. See Shaun's comments in detail about this achievement on page 44 of this issue of KiwiFlyer.

Celebrations began in the afternoon with speeches from key industry and local dignitaries, followed by the Hon Dr Wayne Mapp, Associate Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Research, Science and Technology and John Jones, Chairman of the Aviation Industry Cluster, cutting the ribbon to open the newly sealed GA runway at Hamilton Airport.

An entertaining airshow then followed, with the capabilities of a range of Waikato manufactured aircraft ably demonstrated to the appreciative invited audience. Guests later regrouped in the evening for a formal dinner to conclude the occasion.

Counting the Aircraft

Aircraft that count towards the total of 1000 have been manufactured by four companies. They encompass eight models including: five models manufactured by Pacific Aerospace; the P-750 XSTOL, CT4, Cresco, Fletcher and Air Tourer, Alpha Aviation's Alpha 160A Trainer, Micro Aviation's Bantam B22 Microlight and Autoflight's Dominator Autogyro.

The largest manufacturer, Pacific Aerospace, holds the honour of achieving the 1000th aircraft with its latest P-750 XSTOL aircraft destined for export to South Africa. Referring to his company's accomplishment, Pacific Aerospace CEO, Damian Camp said, "we are delighted to have produced the one thousandth aircraft. It is a major milestone that highlights the long and colourful history of Pacific Aerospace and the wider aviation cluster. This milestone sets the scene for our company's continued success and provides emerging manufacturers with an accomplishment they can

springboard off."

Of the 1000 aircraft, Pacific Aerospace produced 627, Micro Aviation produced 333, Alpha Aviation produced 23 and Autoflight produced 17 autogyros. There will be more than a few readers who are taken by surprise when they read the total for Micro Aviation – an outstanding achievement for Max Clear and his delightful Bantam microlight.

Heads of each of the four companies were presented with framed certificates to mark the occasion and their achievement.

The New Zealand picture

The Hon Dr Wayne Mapp was the keynote speaker at the celebration. He pointed out that the aviation industry is a growing and significant contributor to New Zealand's economy and Government support is strong, and multi-faceted. "The wider aviation industry employs more than 16,000 staff in more than 700 companies which export goods and services worth more than NZ\$800 million. The industry's goal is to reach NZ\$2 billion in exports within the next ten years. Aircraft manufacture and component supply is providing a visible and important face to the industry." said Dr Mapp.

With several niche aircraft designs, and revolutionary new titanium materials from Bay of Plenty firm Titanox, industry commentators predict that the next 1000 aircraft will be produced within another seven to ten years. In his address, Shaun Mitchell said that, "The New Zealand aviation industry has had an exciting history, but the potential for its future is mind-boggling. Industry exports totalled \$800 million last year. However, we now have sixteen new aviation projects in the pipeline - fifteen of those being new aircraft designs. These new projects represent a potential \$927 million in annual exports".

The 16 prototype projects are at different stages with some still requiring investment. These projects include new designs for an amphibian aircraft, military and civilian gliders, as well as an innovative short haul cargo plane, all of which can be built in NZ. The opportunity for not only local, but national industry is high.



The Hon Dr Wayne Mapp and John Jones cutting the ribbon to open the newly sealed GA runway at Hamilton International Airport.



A large crowd attended the celebration at Hamilton International Airport to mark the 1000th aircraft manufactured in the Waikato region