

Oceania's Southern Base at Queenstown

Oceania Aviation's new base at Queenstown is now well established. KiwiFlyer recently spoke with Base Manager Aaron Shaw and Oceania Director Jonathan Bowen about the achievement of setting up the operation and their plans to extend capabilities in the near future.

The decision to set up

Jonathan explains that Oceania were frequently being asked by clients to set up an operation in the South Island. The decision was expedited when, in the same week, they had four more requests plus were offered an opportunity for hangar space.

Jonathan says "It made sense being in the business of supporting helicopters that we should have a presence in a region that is very active. We see the Queenstown base as a portal to our overhaul shops based at Ardmore. This allows us to provide parts and support locally, not just for operators but also in support of those that have established in-house maintenance capabilities. We can also offer the same parts and support services to other maintenance providers in the region. Another decider was the fact that one of our senior Ardmore engineers, Aaron Shaw, was originally a South Islander and keen to move back there. With his very competent engineering skills and a desire to move into management, the opportunity all came together nicely."

The Queenstown Team

There is a team of three: Aaron is LAME qualified with 17 years of experience and was previously Projects Manager for Oceania at Ardmore. Dave Hockey is a Licensed Avionics Engineer with 15 years experience. Dave trained in the UK and moved to NZ in 2005. Jason Millichamp is also LAME qualified and has 15 years of experience. Jason has worked around NZ and abroad and can draw from experiences in places such as Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, Laos PDR, Cambodia, Singapore and Australia, as well as spending two years in Rolls Royce Engine Overhaul.

A fresh beginning

Oceania took over half of a recently extended hangar at the airport which it shares with Glacier Southern Lakes Helicopters. An inspection / avionics room was added and office space also



A family of 500's in the Oceania hangar at Queenstown. As with the base at Ardmore, operations here have been streamlined according to Oceania's successful MORE Programme.

constructed ready for a successful hanger opening in December of 2008.

When Oceania arrived, the hangar was a bare shell, meaning that all the benches, stands, mechanical and special tooling that was required needed to be purchased or made. Although more time consuming, this offered the advantage of allowing a start from scratch design for the operation, with the Queenstown team being able to draw on the experience of the Ardmore facility to get everything set up for maximum efficiency right from the beginning.

With his extensive avionics experience, Dave has set up all the tooling required to carry out annual avionics inspections and also to service helicopter and light fixed wing avionic systems.

Oceania's MORE Programme

The Queenstown team have closely followed and replicated Ardmore's successful MORE (Maintenance, Overhaul and Repair Excellence) programme. Aaron explains that "We too have had outstanding results. The main advantage for Queenstown was putting systems in place that streamline work flow and increase

productivity. As well, the team now has a much greater awareness of job costs and wastage - the end result being a reduction in cost to the operator. The programme was easy to implement here in Queenstown as all the guys could see the benefits even before starting. It has also really helped our ability to think outside the square and to focus on productivity and efficiency when approaching helicopter maintenance". Aaron says that a lot of credit for this result is owed to Alysha Maynard, who in her role as Office Administrator, also co-ordinated the MORE programme in Queenstown.

Projects and feedback to date

Aside from normal maintenance duties, the team is continuously involved in project work. An interesting example was the importing of an AS350 to refurbish and BA upgrade for a local operator. Another was the assembly of an AS355N that arrived from Japan in parts having been stripped for a 12 year inspection.

Another recent project was the installation of Oceania's new carbon fibre spray tank assembly and stay-less booms onto Amuri Helicopters AS350 FX2.

A current project is the installation of Oceania's MD500 spray system onto a 500D for a local operator. Aaron says that customer feedback has been universally positive, especially in regard to their MORE Programme implementation.

Future plans

Now that the setup phase in Queenstown is complete, Aaron, Dave and Jason plan to create more synergies with Oceania's Ardmore base in order to use Ardmore's component, turbine and airborne systems divisions to further support local operators throughout the Central Otago area.

There are also plans for the near future to extend the Queenstown base capabilities towards smaller components and maintenance in order to assist the component shop at Ardmore and help reduce down time for local operators.

For more information

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