

Airborne Aviation's Doug Graham fits into the mix rather nicely. A former Air Force pilot who served his country for 39 years, Doug enjoys the lifestyle beyond the fringes of the Sydney rat-race, and is a firm believer that rural aerodromes such as Camden are perfect for flight training.

"Life is simple at Camden," Doug tells Aviator. "The procedures are simple, the airport is picturesque, and being in the countryside it's quiet and has a pleasant feel. Also, it's not as busy as metropolitan airports, such as Bankstown, so there's not as much waiting time on the ground. We're also very close to the training area so students get more flying time and ultimately, better value for money."

Airborne Aviation boasts several aircraft types that are available for hire or joy flying. Aircraft such as the Cessna 172, 182, 152 Aerobat, 310, Piper Tomahawk, Seneca II, Citabria, Beechcraft Duke, Debonair, Pitts Special, Chipmunk, Stearman and Tiger Moth. Such a fine variety of aircraft should be enough to keep any pilot enthralled, whether they're a novice looking at starting their own flying journey, or an experienced commercial pilot looking for the thrill of some real seat-of-the-pants flying.

"Students who stay here after their training have the opportunity to fly a great variety of aircraft," Doug says.

"There are so many options. It's one of the reasons why I love what I do as an instructor. My days are never boring ... my first flight of the day could be an ab initio lesson in a Cessna; followed by aerobatics in the Pitts and then a joyflight in the Tiger Moth. It's that kind of variety that makes this job so enjoyable.

"We're also a friendly bunch out here," Doug adds. "And we offer a professional, yet relaxed and fun training environment. Training is typically one-on-one, not in a crowded classroom. And students will not be bounced around between instructors as can be the case at other organisations. Personalised attention allows us to deliver training as effectively as possible at a pace determined by the student. No matter how far you want to go or what you want to do, we can usually cater to your requirements. Camden is a great place to fly."

#### BATHURST, NSW

BATHURST is a regional city in the Central Tablelands of New South Wales. Located approximately 200 kilometres west of Sydney, the township is the oldest inland settlement in Australia and has an estimated population of around 33,000 people.

Of significant importance to the growth of the township is the local airport, which is presently serviced by one



airline, Regional Express (Rex); and offers flight training facilities. The airport's history dates to just prior the Second World War, which prompted the Federal Government to establish the aerodrome and to provide commercial air services between Bathurst and Sydney. Today, several flying schools operate at the airport and it is used frequently by trainee pilots during their navigation training. There are no landing charges for aircraft under 2,000 kg (4,400 lb) which makes it a popular option as a destination for many pilots, mostly trainees from Bankstown and Camden airports in the Sydney Basin.

Bathurst is a perfect location for flight training. Why? For many reasons. "The big factor for us is reliability of weather," explains Central West Flying School's Chris Stott. "We have consistently better weather all year round than coastal areas. We don't have wind affect from the ocean, we have less precipitation and in summertime we have less thunderstorm activity. We literally have superb weather all year round and in any given year it's known that we only ever lose on average 10 days a year due to weather."

Like most country airports, another factor that gives Bathurst appeal is less congested airspace. "Not just airspace," Chris says, "but less congestion generally, at and around the airfield. Students get value for money whereas at some busy metropolitan airports they can waste 15 minutes taxiing or holding on the ground."

Chris adds that country aerodromes located inland tend to offer hangarage at a lower cost than their coastal brethren, and either lower or nil landing charges, which are ultimately factored into the pricing for the students as well.

But while there are advantages so too are there challenges. "Many of our students come from out of Bathurst, half from Sydney and Canberra," Chris says. "To get the benefits that we offer, they suffer the inconvenience of a five hour round trip." But to help dull the impact of the long haul via road, Central West provides a unique package of quality accommodation (four rooms) and a courtesy car. "A

number of our students do a block of two or three days to take advantage of the weather, and we provide a package that takes as many of the inconveniences of being away out of the equation."

Central West commenced operations by focusing on the fastest growing segment in Australian aviation: recreational flying, then added General Aviation, in conjunction with the Phoenix Aero Club. The school employs instructors with a wide range of experience from hang gliding and ultralights to multi-engine general aviation; while a fleet of modern aircraft in the recreational and general categories provides a class of equipment the envy of many schools throughout the land.

"Everyone gets trained on the Jabiru and once they earn their pilot's certificate, they can then take two streams; a type conversion onto the BRM Bristell or a conversion onto our Cessna 152 as their first step towards getting a PPL in addition to their RA certificate," Chris says. "We encourage new students to start in RA because we can save them \$70 or \$80 an hour for that first critical 35-40 hours, and then we'll convert them to the Cessnas and the PPL for an additional six hours or so. The beauty of that is that at the end of their training period they have an RA pilot's certificate and a PPL GA licence for less cost than if they'd done the PPL from scratch. And because they hold both licences, in our hangar alone they can choose to fly one of six aircraft."

The school has also benefited from its association with the Bathurst Aero Club, an institution in the Bathurst flying community that has been operating continuously since 1962. This adds diverse experience and other support to the school and provides access to comfortable licensed premises. Central West's premises are able to cater for training groups of up to 20 people and social events of up to 80.

Another unique feature of the school is its brand new BRM Bristell, a sophisticated aircraft that has since become the school's flagship. Boasting a Jabiru 120hp engine, touring aids like advanced avionics (Dynon Skyview panel) and



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auto-pilot; and a ballistic recovery parachute capable of lowering the aircraft to the ground; the Czech-built aircraft's popularity has proved to be spectacular.

"The Bristell has only been available for private hire for 10 weeks now, and it's done 120 hours," Chris says. "And we don't do ab initio training in it, we purchased exclusively for the private market. It's a very popular aircraft."

**WOLLONGONG, NSW**

WOLLONGONG is a seaside city located in the Illawarra region of New South Wales and lies on the narrow coastal strip between the Illawarra Escarpment and the Pacific Ocean, 82 kilometres south of Sydney. Boasting a population of more than 292,000, Wollongong is the third largest city in New South Wales after Sydney and Newcastle, and the ninth largest city in Australia.

Wollongong is serviced by Illawarra Regional Airport, also known as the Wollongong Airport, and is the base for the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society

(HARS). The airport is located at Albion Park Rail, in the Shellharbour City district. NSW Air is the sole GA flying school operating on the airport.

According to NSW Air marketing manager Barry Sandry, Wollongong Airport offers many benefits for students and private pilots alike.

"The advantages for us here is the lack of congestion when it comes to getting on and off the ground and in addition to that, we're located inside our own training area," Barry tells Aviator. "So you're not actually flying

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