

LAA LTD – AUSTRALIAN AEROSPACE LIMITED
JULY 3 2008 SITE VISIT

Report by LAA Committee member, SQNLDR George Hodgson

On Thursday 3rd July, Australian Aerospace (AA) Ltd hosted a very informative visit for 37 LAA members at their Brisbane Airport site in Brisbane.

I must admit I was delighted to see 37 LAA members (a record for a Brisbane site visit) turn up to have a look at some of the most exciting rotary wing helicopters that the Australian Defence Force has purchased and which AA will be maintaining. Paul Buckingham, the AA Supply Chain Director together with Dave Gamble, the Caribou Supply Chain Manager, Jason Hill the (ARH) Tiger Supply Chain Manager and Peter Evans the Production Supply Chain Manager, made sure that we were all informed of the supply issues related to introducing new aircraft into service (Tiger and MRH90 troop lift helicopter) as well as keeping the oldest aircraft in the Australian Defence Force fleet flying, the Caribou.

LAA members, were provided a detailed presentation on the role Australian Aerospace performs for the Australian Defence Force, which is deeper level servicing of the Caribou aircraft (introduced into the Air Force in 1964) to the assembly and maintenance of the Tiger reconnaissance and MRH90 troop lift helicopters. AA also sells and maintains a large number of Eurocopter commercial helicopters around Australia with the commercial Head Office located at Bankstown airport, NSW. The presentation also highlighted the link that AA has with their parent companies of Eurocopter and European Aeronautic Defence and Space (EADS).

After the presentation LAA members were split into groups and provided a tour of the Caribou maintenance hangar and warehouse. Dave Gamble, highlighted the main issue with sustaining an ageing aircraft was spares availability, and the long lead time (up to a year) if a part is unavailable and needs to be re-manufactured. This means that Australian Aerospace is proactively searching the globe for Caribou spares and ensuring they have a good relationship with their key suppliers. Dave mentioned the Caribou is an extremely robust aircraft and still has a few years left with a withdrawal date from service being December 2011.

From the Caribou hangar LAA members went to the Tiger Production & MRH90 Flightline facility and warehouse, where Jason Hill provided a brief on the Production/Flightline process. Essentially all components are sent from the various European countries to Brisbane, where they are assembled (similar to a big airfix kit) to a set schedule. Jason explained the main challenge for AA relates to communication on the schedule between Europe and Australia, in ensuring that the required parts are available for assembly. Codification of the new items and ensuring that Australian Defence supply personnel have visibility of part stock codes, prior to ordering, is also a challenge.. Whilst there are still teething issues with the introduction into service of the (ARH) Tiger aircraft, there is no denying that it is an extremely advanced aircraft.

The visit ended with a nice lunch provided by Australian Aerospace and an opportunity to discuss any questions from the tour as well as an offer to visit the MRH90 Production facility located in an adjacent facility. I did not go on this extended leg, but I was informed it was very interesting for those members who attended. The tour concluded with the presentation of the LAA plaque to Paul Buckingham, to thank Australian Aerospace for providing a unique opportunity to visit and see both old and new technology.



LAA Committee member George Hodgson thanks Paul Buckingham, Supply Chain Director, Australian Aerospace