



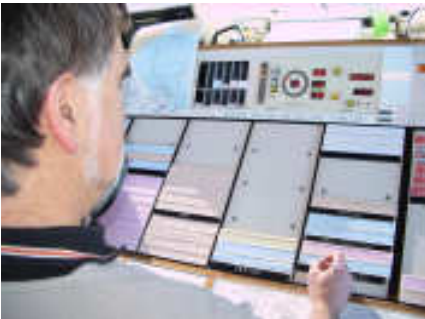
WES TO RETIRE

You may not recognize his face but you certainly know the sound of his voice. Wes Cashion has been working at Hobart Tower as an Air Traffic Controller for 29 of the 36 years he's been in the business of controlling the skies. Now, in a few more weeks, Wes will retire.

"I married a Hobart girl, and when you live in Perth you understand how isolated it is, but I ended up back home by default. My father had a serious heart attack and couldn't work the farm, so I took 12 months leave without pay and came back home in '75 to look after the farm." said Wes.

"I started in Melbourne 1971 with a two year course 4 months in the College, eight months in the field and so on. Then on January 3rd 1973 I started in Perth W.A." Wes said. Born in Tasmania, Wes is a farm boy from Ouse. His own description, "a Uni dropout" who drove trucks until age 21, and still not sure what he wanted to do, his ex-father in law saw an ad in the paper for Air Traffic Controllers.

Wes had tried to get a transfer back to Tasmania and it wasn't until a couple of days before he was due to go back to Perth the call came through, he could transfer to Launceston, but he would have to go back to the bottom of the ladder again. In 1978 a job came up in Hobart and Wes grabbed it.



A & L: Wes at work in the Tower. 36 years in a pressure environment. Encircled: Wes, ATC Course Class of '71.

Wes applied, got a reply and did the test and then heard nothing for 6 months. Then suddenly the phone rang, "your course starts next month" ! Wes was on his way. "I knew nothing about aeroplanes, no aviation experience whatsoever, but it's been an interesting job, it's been kind to me and I've enjoyed it." smiled Wes.



"I've been married a couple of times, we have three great kids, one living in Adelaide now, and I'm about to become a poppy, and I have another daughter who is an ICU Nurse here in Hobart and a son who is about to get his architectural degree having already attained his Environmental Design."

"After my son was born there was an amicable divorce, and I've since remarried and have two step kids, one of whom is a teacher and she is married to an Air Traffic Controller from Hobart, Joel Northey. This would never have happened if Joel hadn't been down here from Brisbane, not knowing anyone, and me inviting him to come around home for dinner,,,,, and as they say the rests history." laughed Wes.

Wes has noticed the biggest change with the job over the decades is communication. Where there were six regions in Australia now there's just two with Melbourne and Brisbane handling all the enroute control. "There hasn't been a great change in aircraft numbers in Hobart, but capacity has been a big thing, and now days with air travel being so cheap, there's a lot more passengers."

"Helicopter training has given us a big boost and both the fixed wing training organizations give us enough to do." "Memorable aircraft that have landed, We've had all the big aircraft, every type of the 747 from the SP's up to a 400, there's no worries about getting in and out and the tarmac is strong enough, probably the biggest was the Antanov 224 which brought in a couple of engines for InCat."



Wes has seen TAA come and go, Ansett, East West, Kendalls, Australian, Impulse, Airlines of Tasmania disappear and grow strong again. Wes has had one May-day in 36 years, when a Sea King Helicopter did an engine at night, and couldn't get back onto the ship. The best aircraft for an Air Traffic controller to control was the DC9 and it's reinvention the 717. After Cyclone Tracey wrecked Darwin, Wes was transferred back to Perth from Jandakot to help handle Darwin's enroute traffic, that was a tough few months. His busiest day was 1988 Tall Ships, when every man and his dog wanted to see them.

"Generally you can read what sort of Pilot is in the cockpit, by the way they handle themselves on the radio." said Wes. "I tell this to every student who comes up to the tower, if you don't understand something, ask again, and if you still don't understand, ask again! Sure, we'll put down the microphone and say you're a bloody dickhead, and you will probably think you are too, if you are not sure ask and ask again, because it's the only way you will be safe." said Wes.