

# ABACE CONVENTION NEWS

## BUSINESS AVIATION

### AsBAA Helps to Broaden Bizav Vision Across Region

by Ian Sheppard  
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*Jenny Lau, AsBAA chairperson speaking at ABACE 2018.*

Industry associations can be critical in cultivating positive change, especially in an industry that is often vilified and misunderstood. Thanks to the Asian Business Aviation Association (AsBAA), seeds of growth are sprouting around the Asia-Pacific region, nurtured by AsBAA's efforts to educate politicians and regulators about the value of the freedom to fly from anywhere, to anywhere.

Speaking to AsBAA before the ABACE 2019 show, **AIN** sought to learn the latest on these changes from Jenny Lau, chairperson; Gary Moran of insurance underwriter Aon, vice-chairman; and Phil Balmer, of TAG Aviation, also a vice-chairman (David Dixon of Jetcraft is the third vice-chairman).

One of the areas that was addressed recently led to further refining the association's membership structure. The initial changes were unveiled to AsBAA members just before ABACE 2018. Now, believes Moran, the categories and tiers first unveiled in 2017 will work better. "We are [still] heavily reliant on membership for revenue, so we need to ensure it is fit for purpose.

"There were two stages to this—to right-size; and add another membership tier, in partnership with Asian Sky Group. Phil and I sat down with them to discuss what they could offer the membership," said Moran. One suggestion was for Hong Kong-based ASG to offer optional service enhancements based on its information and consultancy services, including industry directories and magazines and support for aircraft buying and selling.

The other aspect was that feedback from the "new" regional chapters around Asia was that the membership structure didn't always work well for them.

AsBAA realized that its "individual-member" tier actually consisted of mostly small-corporation memberships. So it stopped offering the individual membership option last year, then "brought it back," but as a clear category for "engineers, pilots and professionals," said Moran. "We've seen in Hong Kong and Singapore that the pilot chapters come together very well—creating WhatsApp groups and having meetings, etc."

The latest membership structure also brings in a flight-school category, building on the excellent work of AsBAA's Discovery chapter.

#### Adding More Chapters

Moran noted that in July 2017 when the Board of Governors (AsBAA's executive committee) was elected, "We only really had the Hong Kong chapter, with Phil as chapter chairman. "But everyone [complained] 'AsBAA is all about Hong Kong' and that we weren't looking at the other parts. I'm in Singapore, so I took it on to get AsBAA rolling there, and we picked a few core objectives." He gave as one example getting an ILS installed at Seletar, Singapore's business aviation airport/industry hub.

"At the same time," Moran said, "Jenny has spent a lot of time getting the China chapter up and running. Then, towards the end of the first year, we looked elsewhere."

Balmer said: "In The Philippines, business aviation has been active for many years, and we had some pioneering-type members. Now, there is a very active chapter there. We had a Safety Day and a pilot's day, with almost 200 people—the key goal being to raise the safety bar. Last year, Singapore had a Safety Day as part of Singapore Aviation Week."

This year, he said, the plan was to hold a Safety Day in Beijing on April 12, the Friday before ABACE, hosted by Lau's company, Sino Jet; and another Safety Day will be held in Singapore on Thursday, September 12, said Balmer.

"We have invited the CAAC deputy director for the transportation department, and representatives from north Asia and EASA will be sharing insights [in Beijing]," said Lau. "Similar to other chapters, we've been trying to have more meetings. It really is a big region so we're trying to divide it into different areas—GBA [Greater Bay Area], North, Shanghai, etc. And we've been looking for more members to host meetings."

Further afield, AsBAA has also made inroads into Indonesia and Thailand, for example. While the former is now on the back burner for a while, Moran said the current thinking is to have a Mekong chapter to cover Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar. "The operators are all centered around Bangkok, but the plan is to open up and call it the Mekong chapter." He is hoping it will be a success like the Philippines, where "they got a lot of buy-in from the government and regulators, etc.—a real feather in the cap for the Philippines chapter."

He said that AsBAA planned to launch the Mekong chapter last year "but we had too many events going on—so we decided to do it in 2019." Balmer noted that "the area is huge, and we're a small association. We have to focus on the issues that are affecting us—such as Hong Kong slots and the Singapore ILS. These things keep us busy."

With Indonesia, Moran commented that although AsBAA was successful in helping to persuade the government not to impose punitive costs on business jet operations, "We probably took on too much too quickly. We had a board of governor [member] there, but they had too high a personal workload. And we haven't got many members there. There is another aviation association there, INACA, and we have tried [successfully] to form ties with their charter, business and general aviation chapter. We participated in INACA's two events last year and we are working more closely with them. But it is a work in progress to get our own chapter there."

## **Greater Bay Development**

With all this wider regional focus, AsBAA has not taken its eye off the ball in the Hong Kong area, where airport access for business aviation has long been a key concern. "We feel like our voice is being heard," said Balmer, reflecting on the Chinese government's recently released plans for the Greater Bay Area; with the Macau airport being designated for business aviation to develop, given constraints at Chep Lap Kok Airport. This follows other successes, and he reflected, "We've had a lot of help trying to get the message across on utilizing other [GBA] airports and using helicopter cross-border transportation. Basically, the [recent Chinese] government release was music to our ears." The policy changes were helped along by AsBAA. Some of the association's positions appeared in a document that shows the Chinese government is "recognizing the benefits we can bring to the Greater Bay Area. Hong Kong is one of the world's great cities and it has one airport. Compare that to New York or London, which have maybe 12 around them. But we feel the Greater Bay Area can work much better."

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