



## PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT v3

### Exploring mental health reporting culture, policies and practices in rural commercial and private pilots in Australia.

Name:	Position:	Organisation:
Assoc/ Prof Rachel Rossiter	Principal Supervisor/Investigator	School of Rural Medicine
Sithu Reynolds	Student Researcher	School of Rural Medicine
Dr Indra Choudhury	Principal Co-ordinating Investigator	School of Rural Medicine
Dr Sean Quinn	Co-Investigator/ Clinical supervisor	Astley Medical Centre, St Mary's NSW

#### INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a research study about how rural commercial and private pilots experience mental health reporting policies and practices in Australia. The study is being conducted by Sithu Reynolds, A/Professor Rachel Rossiter and Dr Indra Choudhury from the School of Rural Medicine, Charles Sturt University with Dr Sean Quinn from Astley Medical Centre. Charles Sturt University is an Australian University, TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018. Charles Sturt University CRICOS Provider: 00005F.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact the research team using the details at the end of this document.

#### What is the purpose of this study?

This research aims to understand how rural commercial and private pilots in Australia experience mental health assessment, reporting and support within aviation regulatory frameworks, particularly those administered by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Although sound mental health is increasingly recognised as important for aviation safety, there is limited research specifically focused on rural and regional pilot communities in Australia. Rural pilots may face distinct challenges—such as geographic isolation, limited access to mental health services, financial pressures, and concerns about the confidentiality and fairness of medical certification processes that are well reported in the research literature or by policy makers. By exploring your experiences, this research aims to generate insights that will inform more supportive, proportionate and effective approaches to mental health management in rural aviation. The findings may contribute to policy refinement, enhanced trust in regulatory processes, and improved support for pilots.

#### Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

We are seeking to recruit pilots, who meet the following criteria:

- **Rural private pilots**
- **Rural or regional commercial pilots** (e.g., charter operators, regular public transport, aeromedical services, agricultural operations)
- Current or recent aviation practice in Australia (within the past 5 years)
- Experience with aviation medical certification processes related to mental health
- Operating primarily in rural, regional or remote contexts in Australia

346 Leeds Parade, ORANGE, NSW, 2800

T: +61 2 6365 7245 | E: [rossiter@csu.edu.au](mailto:rossiter@csu.edu.au) | [csu.edu.au/School of Rural Medicine](http://csu.edu.au/School of Rural Medicine)

Charles Sturt University - TEQSA Provider Identification: PRV12018 (Australian University). CRICOS Provider: 00005F. ABN: 83 878

708 551.

**You are not eligible to participate in this research if:**

- You are currently experiencing significant psychological distress or an acute mental health crisis that would make participation inadvisable.

**What does this study involve?**

You will be asked to participate in an interview on Microsoft Teams or Zoom at a time convenient to you. The interview will be conducted with a member of the research team. You get to choose how much of your experience you disclose, and you can postpone or end the interview at any stage. It is anticipated that the interview would take no longer than one hour.

If you take part in the interview you will be emailed a copy of your interview transcript to review, and request corrections or deletions if needed. You will also be given an opportunity at this time to withdraw from the study. If we do not hear back from you within two weeks we will assume that you still consent to the use of your data.

**Are there risks and benefits to me in taking part in this study?*****Potential Risks***

This study explores sensitive topics—including mental health difficulties, experiences of regulatory assessment, career concerns, and professional stress—some of the questions may remind you of difficult experiences including difficult periods of mental health illness, regulatory investigations, or situations experienced as unfair. Discussing these topics may cause emotional distress, such as sadness, anxiety or frustration.

Whether you choose to participate in this project or not, a list of mental health support services will be available on the project site. If, during the interview, you do not wish to answer a particular question, you may simply state that this is not a question that you wish to answer. You may pause or stop the interview at any time without explanation or consequence. The interviewer will adopt a supportive, non-judgmental approach, and if you experience distress, will offer support, a break, or the option to conclude the interview. If you have not already accessed the list of support services, the interviewer will email the list to you.

**Important Note:** This research is for data collection and information gathering only. No clinical diagnosis, assessment or treatment will be provided. If you are struggling with your mental health, we encourage you to reach out to your GP, a mental health professional, or one of the support services on the list that will be provided to you.

***Potential Benefits***

There will be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research, and we cannot promise any personal health or career benefit. However, you may find value in having the opportunity to have your voice and experience heard on an important issue, to contribute to research that may inform policy and practice improvements in aviation mental health and has the potential to improve the experiences of other rural pilots.

**How is this study being paid for?**

This research is unfunded and is being conducted as part of an academic degree (Doctor of Medicine) at Charles Sturt University.

**Will taking part in this study (or travelling to) cost me anything, and will I be paid?**

Participation in this study will not cost you anything. Interviews will be conducted remotely (via videoconference or telephone) to minimise any inconvenience or travel burden. You will not receive payment for participating in this research.



### What if I don't want to take part in this study?

Participation in this research is **entirely your choice**. Whether or not you decide to participate will not disadvantage you in any way, nor will it affect your employment, regulatory status, relationship with CASA, or any other professional arrangement. Only those who give their informed consent will be included in the project.

### What if I participate and want to withdraw later?

If you participate in the interview and want to withdraw your interview data within two weeks of being emailed your interview transcript, we can withhold your data from analysis and will destroy it after the five year data retention period is over. However, if you attempt to withdraw more than two weeks after we email you your transcript for review you will not be able to do so as your data will have been de-identified, analysed and incorporated into the findings.

### How will my confidentiality be protected?

Your personal details, interview recordings and interview transcripts will be stored in a secure password-protected folder on the Charles Sturt University (CSU) file server. Your interview transcript will be deidentified by replacing your name with a pseudonym of your choosing. A document linking your name and pseudonym will be generated and stored in a secure password-protected file on the CSU file server that is separate from other documents. Deidentified transcripts will be stored in a separate secure password-protected folder in the CSU file server. Only the researchers listed on this information sheet will have access to the data discussed above unless you consent otherwise and except as required by law, for example if research data is subpoenaed for legal proceedings.

Any interview quotes that we publish will be chosen discerningly and with a view to not disclosing so much information that your identity is revealed, but enough that readers can understand the themes present in the data. Data will be retained for a period of 5 years on the Charles Sturt University file server before being destroyed.

### Rural Community Confidentiality

Rural aviation is a small community, and complete anonymity can be challenging. We recognise this and will take particular care to:

- Avoid reporting unique combinations of characteristics that might identify you
- Use non-specific role descriptors (e.g., "rural commercial pilot" rather than naming specific operators)
- Limit identifying contextual details in any reports or publications

If you have specific concerns about anonymity due to your unique position in the aviation community, please discuss these with the research team before consenting to participate.

### Confidentiality Limits

**It is important that you understand the limits of confidentiality.** In the following circumstances, the research team may need to break confidentiality:

- **If you disclose information suggesting immediate risk of serious harm** to yourself or others, the research team has an ethical and legal obligation to respond appropriately. This may include discussing the matter with the project supervisor or, in serious cases, contacting emergency services. However, we will discuss any such concerns with you first, wherever possible.
- **If required by law** (e.g., if a court orders release of research records), confidentiality may be overridden. However, we will not voluntarily share information with regulatory bodies (CASA), employers or professional organisations without your explicit consent.



### **What will happen to the information that I give you?**

The findings from this research will be reported in a Doctor of Medicine oral presentation and project report, at research and health professional conferences. We plan to publish the research data in the form of a paper in an academic journal.

If you enrol in the study you will be asked whether you would like the research results sent to you when the research project is completed. If you indicate yes, you will be prompted for an email address. If you indicate no, you will not be sent the research results at the completion of the project. Your decision regarding study results will be documented alongside your contact information to ensure that this is respected at the end of the project.

### **What should I do if I want to discuss this study further before deciding?**

If you would like further information about this research before deciding whether to participate, please contact:

**Assoc/Professor Rachel Rossiter**

[rrossiter@csu.edu.au](mailto:rrossiter@csu.edu.au)

**Sithu Reynolds**

Email: [sithu.reynolds@proton.me](mailto:sithu.reynolds@proton.me)

### **Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of this study?**

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project (Approval number: H26030). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Research Integrity Unit via the following contact details:

The Presiding Officer  
Human Research Ethics Committee  
Research Integrity Unit  
Locked Bag 588  
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678  
Phone: (02) 6933 4213  
Email: [ethics@csu.edu.au](mailto:ethics@csu.edu.au)

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated thoroughly, and you will be informed of the outcome.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this important research about mental health in rural aviation. Your experiences are valuable and will help inform better policies and practices. This information sheet is for you to keep.

