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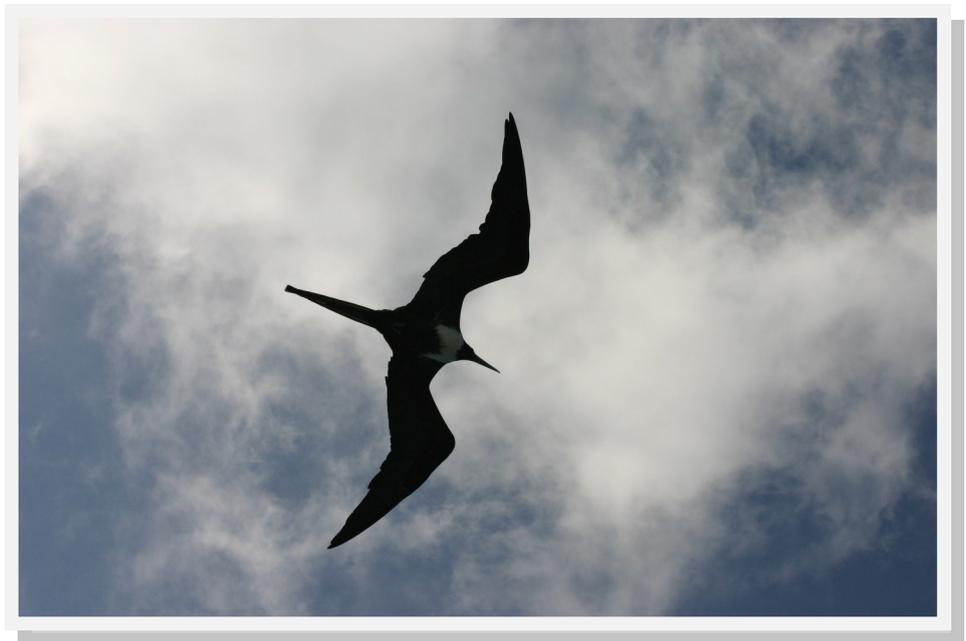
Loxton Fly-in

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Message from the editor.

Trevor Lane



Of course, many club members will know that I have just returned from a trip of a lifetime to the Galapagos “Islands Born of Fire” just off the coast of Ecuador. Many will wish I would stop going on about it, and some have asked that I bore everyone with a slideshow. I am delighted to announce that I have decided the date for the slideshow will be never.

One of the interesting things about the Galapagos is the links between Charles Darwin and his discovery of “evolution”. Whilst I was on my trip; a state that some find it hard to believe I am ever out of; I was relaxing on the deck of the ship, just gazing at the sky sucking on my coca-candy¹ when I noticed that the Frigate Bird (pictured above) which is endemic to the islands; has each wing shaped like a trike wing.

So there you have it. A frigate bird noticed just how efficient a microlight flexwing was and decided to copy us. How cool is that. Just another reason why trike pilots deserve to go down in history as the pioneers of flight.

1. Coca-Candy is a boiled sweet sold in some parts of South America made by mixing the leaf of the cocaine plant with sugar. In this state it does not induce a feeling of “wellness” nor hallucinations and definitely does not make the world fall out of your bottom.

Readers Pictures

The sun is rising and we are ready to go. Tony Batson



Southern Microlight Club Incorporated

Useful information

Southern Microlight Club Inc. is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

Southern Microlight Club Inc. is affiliated to the Hang Gliding Federation of Australia

If you would like to pay money into the club account for payment of membership fees, the purchase of polo shirts, or deposits for events; then please make a direct deposit to:

Account Name : Southern Microlight Club

BSB : 063109

Account No : 10405908

Please indicate your name and what you are paying for. If you do not have enough space in your banking website to put sufficient information, then please email treasurer@southernmicrolightclub.com.au with the details.

Loxton South Australia Fly In April 2013

Kel Mitchner received an invitation from the Loxton Aero Club in South Australia to attend their bi-annual fly in. Mitch opened the invitation to all Southern Microlight Club members. His last trip in 2011 with a group of Trikers mostly from NSW was very memorable for many positive reasons. However, an unfortunate medical issue saw a trike pilot lost on the way to the fly in. In honour of this lost pilot and in the spirit of a triking adventure, a few of us from the club agreed to attend the fly in.

We agreed to meet in Yarrawonga on Wednesday 10th. The club had a general meeting the night before, so Mitch and I agreed to trailer our trikes to Yarrawonga after the clubs general meeting. Tim Penny from Casa was a special guest at the meeting and his topic of procedures in non-towered airports was very appropriate prior to our fly away. Discussions were very enlightening with Tim; so much so that the meeting finished well over our normal finishing time. It was not until 11.30 pm that Mitch and I were finally on the road. We arrived at the airport after 2.00am and quickly tucked ourselves into our swags for much needed sleep.

Max Glynn had his trike at Porepunkah. After a late night at the club meeting he was leaving Melbourne at 4.00am Wednesday morning to be ready in time to leave at first light for the short leg to Yarrawonga. Joe Ferstl from Melbourne and Mark Howard from Bright had

already arrived with their trikes on the Tuesday, so Wednesday morning for them was to be a sleep in and a last minute check over. Mitch and I were woken early by the cracking noise of regular small explosions. "What the hell is going on?" I thought to myself. As I peered out over my swag I could see Peter Mc Lean with a stock man's whip in his hand giving it a vigorous work out, clearing what appeared to be, thousands of White cockatoos flying directly above the hangars and over the

"Leaving in the middle of a hot day was always going to give very predictable results"

runway.

Now that we were awake we decided to assemble our trikes. We heard from Max that his brake warning lights on his car had lit up his dashboard in the glow of the moonlight and he had returned to Melbourne to get them looked at.

It was almost lunch time before we were ready to leave. We were in no hurry. Max had confirmed his brakes were fixed but would not be in Yarrawonga until the following morning so we agreed an alternative rendezvous. The temperature had risen to almost 28 degrees and thermic activity was high. Winds were SW and only 6 kts. on the ground. Unusual I thought for Yarrawonga. We had 4 trikes; one 582

and three 912's. We were to meet up with Simon Treloar and Michael O'Shea from Newcastle along our route. Max would catch up with us tomorrow and Chris Bullen intended to fly direct from Dixon's Creek near Lilydale direct to Loxton on the Friday.

Our first stop was to be Echuca. Immediately after we took off we flew into a 10 knt. head wind. Not the end of the world but the thermic activity associated with it was alive and kicking. Our own fault really! Leaving in the middle of a hot day was always going to give very predictable results. We were constantly rising and falling at around 500 to 1,000 ft per minute. Height made no difference. Our leisurely fly was not to be. We all tried to stay over the cooler air directly above the Murray River to minimise the thermals. As we passed Tocumwal we made our radio calls for transgressing their air space. At





the same time last year when I flew this route the Murray River and the surrounding areas were flooded. Now, it looked like it was in drought. "I love a sunburnt country". Tell that to the farmers down there! The green strip of life either side of the river, appeared to be the only hope of survival. It was not long before we were over Barmah National State forest and the relentless thermal lifting and dropping continued. It seemed endless. Echuca came into site and I looked forward to getting on the ground and having some lunch. It was now 30 degrees and a very bumpy approach on final made landing challenging.

We concluded that conditions only appeared to be worsening for more ongoing thermic activity. As recreational flyers we decided to stay on the ground for a couple of hours until the temperature dropped. A local from the airfield agreed to drive me into town to purchase lunch. 4 salad rolls and a taxi ride back equated to \$12 each for a small salad roll. But they were nice.

It was 4.30pm when we began to taxi our way to runway 17. Kow Swamp near Leichville was visible almost immediately after take-off. Hird Swamp wildlife reserve was soon beneath us as

we motored our way to Kerang.

"You just cannot beat
the kindness of country
spirit."

The flight was much more enjoyable and calmer than today's earlier events. The 10 knt head wind continued. The sun was starting its downward journey, and it was not long before Kerang came into sight. Kerang looked even drier than Echuca. Once on the ground we studied the airfield grounds cautiously, looking for Bindies lying in wait to give

us our first flat tyre. No bindies found; but Mark quickly lost his footing, falling deep into the large open crevices of the dried out ground. One such crevice contained the remnants of an old rabbit burrow. Whilst lowering our wings for the overnight stay, an Air Ambulance twin arrived and parked nearby to pick up from the recently parked ambulance under the trees. Within minutes he was loaded and gone. A local from the airfield volunteered to drive us into town. A two trip journey for him to get us all into town. We were blessed by his generosity as it was now dark. We ensured he stayed with us for a welcome drink. He heard our plans to be at the airfield at 6.30 am to avoid the repeated conditions of yesterday. Without notice he volunteered to leave his car with us to allow us to get an early start in the morning. Taxis don't start operating until 7.30am in Kerang. It was a long walk back to the airport, with a jerry can full of fuel, so we agreed to accept his offer. I dropped him off at his home and said hello and goodbye to his wife before driving back to the motel. It all seemed surreal. You just cannot beat the kindness of country spirit.

At 6.30am we were at the airport. We thought we would stop and have breakfast at Swan Hill. We rang Max but



he was not answering. Mitch rang Simon and they had flown from Newcastle to Hay NSW. Conditions for them were just as bad as ours. They had gone as high as 9500ft (And a little bit more) to avoid the thermals. However, they were still being hit. They could see the thermals still rising high above them. Michael was on his first cross country trip in a trike as a passenger and was getting the experience of his life. At 9500ft conditions were cold so they dropped back to 7,500ft. However, it was not long before Michael decided cold was better than thermals. They remained at that height for much of their journey.

We followed the Murray Valley highway to Swan Hill. Conditions were fantastic. A good decision had been made to leave early. We still had a strong head wind but the calmness in the air was enjoyable. As we approached the 10 nm boundary of Swan Hill we made our inbound calls. An air ambulance was taxiing on the ground for departure. As well as our four trikes, a Jabiru was also inbound at the 10nm boundary. A number of calls were made by Air Ambulance to ensure he knew where we all were. His professionalism was appreciated as he was not leaving the ground until he had accounted for all aircraft. By the time I made it to the airfield he was long gone.

On the ground we again tried Max, but he was not answering. Mitch called



Simon and they were still recovering from their long flight from the day before. They had decided to go direct to Loxton from Hay. We were in no real hurry so we decided to call in on some friends of Mitch's in Balranald. From Swan Hill it is almost a northerly direct track. At least there should be no head wind.

“We finally got in contact with Max and he had decided to go on to Robinvale for the night”

The temperature was starting to rise and we only had a 6knt wind on the ground. Once in the air the Murray River was quickly left behind; followed by the Kyalite State Forest beside the smaller Edward River. Yanga Lake could be seen on the distant horizon. It made a good target to lock onto for a direction to Balranald. The land below continued to maintain its desolate and lifeless look. A feeling of sorriness beckoned as I wondered how the farmers continued to remain viable out here in these non populous unwelcoming plains. The Murrumbidgee River scarred its way across the landscape as we neared Balranald. The temperature was nearing

30 degrees when we made our final approach. The flight had been quite calm, but sinking to the ground brought on another onslaught of thermal activity. “Ride em cowboy” was the only way to get on the ground. We were greeted by Don and Lynda Cook, (Mitch's close friends) who had moved from Melbourne after retiring. After tying down, they taxied us to their house where we had a magnificent BBQ feast. We finally got in contact with Max and he had decided to go on to Robinvale for the night. We were disappointed. He was keen to get to Loxton the next morning to meet up with his family from Adelaide at Loxton airfield. Meanwhile a decision had been made to accept our guest's offer of being put up for the night. Balranald does not have a traffic light, but it does have a Chinese restaurant in its RSL club. I highly recommend it.

We were again at the airport ready for an early start. 6.30 am. The sun was only just breaking the horizon, but we could already feel it warming. We planned our track to Robinvale; then a detour around to the north of Mildura bypassing potentially the RTPs flying into Mildura airport; then a stop at Wentworth with a track following the Murray River into Loxton. As we neared





Lake Benanee, North of Robinvale, Mitch pointed out over the radio the nearby location of where a fellow Trike pilot had been lost on his previous journey to Loxton. It was a sombre moment as we pondered on the “what ifs” and the chance it could happen to anybody. The radios remained silent as we each passed that nearby position.

“The facilities at Wentworth are first class and we appreciated their open use.”

Passing north of Robinvale we then changed our heading for the north of Mildura. Mildura has regular passenger transport aircraft flying in. We did not want to mix with this traffic so we made the decision to go around Mildura. As we neared 10nm of Mildura we made a call to let them know we were transgressing the area. As luck or unluck would have it, a Rex aircraft was making an approach to Mildura. With 4 trikes spread over a 10 mile path, it was important he knew where we all were. As I tracked north I could see to the west that I had the end of the runway directly in my sight. I am potentially

directly in the path of any approaching or departing aircraft. Even though 10 nautical miles out, I decide to drop to 500 feet. I communicated to the Rex pilot regularly to assist him with locating all of our squad, I then heard a Saab RPT tell us he was also inbound, but some way out. It’s times like this when you want the full power of the 912. Joe was behind me in his 582 and he was just approaching the 10nm boundary of Mildura. “If only I had bought the 912”, surely he must be thinking? Eventually we heard both aircraft were on final. Wentworth came into view and it was not long before we were on the ground.

The facilities at Wentworth are first class and we appreciated their open use. A quick discussion with one of the local instructors enlightened us with some of the activities at the airport. The temperature was rising to 30 degrees again, even though it was still morning. We decided to not follow the river to Loxton but make a direct track. No river to protect us today from those ever present thermals. Once we left the river the land below became more moonscape than landscape. The desert like conditions did not seem to deter some individuals from trying to farm the land below. Wow! Unappreciative of what the rewards must be to farm out

here, I climbed even higher looking for calmer air. Lake Victoria on my right looks like a mirage. There is so much water in that lake, beside the Murray River, amongst this barren landscape. We overfly the Sturt Hwy. It seems to have been stalking us since leaving Balranald. Its long straight lines acts as a life line to the isolated farmlets below. The Victorian, South Australian border is in sight. The division of the cleared farmed land on the South Australian is in direct contrast to the Mallee bushland of the Murray Sunset National Park on the Victorian side. A very straight line clearly marks the border. As I pass directly over the border, the GPS time changes back half hour to South Australian time. “Clever!” it makes me laugh. What would the Wright brothers think? Loxton airport appears in the distance. I soon hear Mitch and Mark making their calls in circuit and decide to do a straight in approach on runway 26, as I now know the active runway. It’s just after lunch time when I get onto the ground. I follow the highly visible green man on the 4 wheel motor bike as he leads me to our designated parking areas. Max greets us with a big smile, having successfully flown in, early in the morning from Robinvale. We lower our wings and tie down the trikes as we are not intending to fly for a couple of days.

“The Loxton aero club have military precision in directing aircraft to selected areas”

Loxton Airfield is about 11 km out of the town. It is surrounded by flat farm land which, has recently been ploughed and an almond nut farm. It looks like we are in the middle of nowhere. The new club house, surrounded by rich green grass, watered from the nearby nut farm, looks out of place in the surrounding landscape. We make our way over to

the registration area and receive passes for transport in and out of town, the hangar dinner for Saturday night and 2 cooked breakfast meals. The Loxton aero club have military precision in directing aircraft to selected areas and ensuring all visitors are catered for. Everybody has name badges and I am impressed with their organisation. Simon and Michael finally appear. They have already been in Loxton since yesterday. Looking very relaxed they advise us a local pilot has offered them a vehicle to use for the 4 days they are in town. Wow! Can it get any better? We have a superb lunch in the outdoor area under cover from the sun for the mere price of \$5. With our visitors pack filled with goodies, we pack the car for the short trip into town.

Mitch has booked our accommodation with Smiffy's holiday accommodation in conjunction with the Loxton Aero Club. It accommodates at least 12 people, if not more. We were expecting 7. The house was big, comfortable and homely. The cost of accommodation divided by the seven of us was cheaper than staying in a tent; and it included bacon and eggs in the morning.

“A cold front was on its way with winds turning to the south. Of course!”

Once settled, we headed back to the airfield to fill our trikes with fuel and mix with fellow flyers. Max had elected to camp under his wing to be closer to the atmosphere of the airfield. We spent some time sharing stories and taking in the various mix of aircraft and pilots; one being a World War 2 Lancaster bomber pilot, still with all of his senses. We headed back to town and made ourselves known to the local publican. We had a phone call from Chris. He had left early in the morning



from Dixon Creek with low cloud threatening his departure. He made his first stop at Birchip and had just arrived at the airfield. It was a great solo effort by him and his new trike. Chris found us at the pub and he finally sat down at about 6.30pm for cold lemonade. A long day! The aero club had arranged a dinner for many of us at the local pub. Many introductions were made, a few more drinks and the night quickly passed by.

We spent much of the Saturday at the airfield. There was more talking, relaxation, food and drink. Aircraft continued to arrive from many different locations. All types of aircraft came. It was not long before much of the parking areas were nearly full. A world war 2 bomber pilot, Howard Hendrick, gave a lecture on how they used to land Lancaster planes after bombing raids through the fog in England using Morse code. He was over 90 years old and a great inspiration to all of us. We wanted to hear more from him, but time was short. The hangar dinner was to start at 6.30pm so we made our way back to our accommodation. We decided to check the weather forecast for the next 2 days. A cold front was on its way with winds turning to the south. Of course! The front would pass during

Sunday so we began to think we should delay our departure from Sunday to the Monday. The hangar party was a great event. It was held in a large hangar full of tables, a bar and a stage. We were entertained by a local poet. More entertaining than you would think. Simon and Michael were presented with an award for flying the greatest distance to the fly in. Not a bad effort for a trike. Served by students of the local high school, the food was superb and we all had a great night. It was late when we finally made it back to our beds.

“Max was up over 90kts. at times”

Chris had to work on the Monday, so he made the decision to leave early on Sunday before the change hit Loxton. He was planning another long trip straight back to Melbourne. Max also made a decision to get back to Porepunkah as soon as possible. The change in weather did have one positive; a very strong tail wind for those heading east. We later heard that Max was up over 90 kts. at times with this tail wind. Chris made his first stop at Bendigo on the way back and managed to stay ahead of the cold

front. We had another big lunch at the airfield and watched the anticipated front go by. It tried to rain. The rain was much localised, but not very heavy. Most of the aircraft left early to avoid the change. The wind did pick up but as we were not flying we were not concerned. We arranged to stay another night with Smiffy's and we were pleased with the discounted rate for our over-stay. Once again, we were overwhelmed by the kindness of the country folk. We managed to secure a hangar over night at the airport which allowed us to set our trikes up ready for an early departure in the morning. Back to the local pub we went. Just to say goodbye of course. We were beginning to get known. The SMC T shirts always proved popular for starting a discussion with the locals.

We arrived early Sunday at the airport. The sun was just breaking the horizon and all was very peaceful. The change had made conditions a lot cooler and all of us rugged up for a much colder flight. We decided to make a direct track to Robinvale with a quick stop over there and then back to Balranald. We had been offered accommodation by Don and Lynda once again and decided we would be fools to refuse their hospitality once more. Simon and Michael were flying east to the coast via Goulbourn and agreed to also stop over at Balranald. The trip to Robinvale was calm and enjoyable. Once over the border we followed the divisional line of the Murray

“it refused to be resuscitated for more than a few minutes.”

Sunset National Park and the adjoining flat barren farmland. We crossed the Calder highway South of Mildura and then over Hattah National Park. A farmer was clearing his field by way of fire and we were forced to fly through smoke, trapped by a wide large inversion layer. We crossed the Murray once and

then again twice, due to its snake like path. Robinvale was soon in sight. Mark added some excitement to the trip whilst landing by getting a flat tyre on his front wheel. “Bugger”. We attempted to breathe life into the tyre, but it refused to be resuscitated for more than a few minutes. It was a 45 minute flight to Balranald. Thoughts were expressed of flying to Balranald and hoping it would still be up when he landed. Common sense prevailed and I agreed to stay with Mark and go to town to get his tyre fixed, whilst the others flew on to the comforts awaiting us in Balranald.

An inquisitive local pulled up at the secluded airport. Whilst Mark talked to him, I looked around to see where Max had stayed the night when camping at the airport. With little facilities and the grounds full of “3 cornered jacks” it would have been a long lonely night. Smithy the local agreed to take us the 6kms into town. Local knowledge took us directly to the tyre fitter in the back streets of Robinvale. The repair was quick and efficient. Smithy returned us quickly back to the airport and it only took minutes to put the repaired tyre back on the trike. Once again we thanked a country local for their help and we prepared ourselves for our departure. A quick look at both wind socks on the airfield saw them stiff in the

horizontal position. “What?” The wind had got up quickly. Mark and I decided to sit it out for a while and take an extended break. A quick check on the internet and the winds were gusting 18 kts. and more. Not impossible to fly in, but we were not in any hurry, so we decided to wait. After waiting for an hour we decided to head back to town for lunch. We made a decision to walk, with the hope of getting a lift by a passing car. Unbelievably, Smithy was passing once again with his grandson and he gave us another lift into town.

We spent a number of hours in town having lunch, coffee; another coffee and

“Once again we thanked a country local for their help”

an afternoon relax. We tried the “Open 7 days a week pub for a beer, but it was closed. Interesting! I cannot have another coffee. We checked the weather again and there was no change. We checked last light for Balranald. 6pm. We needed to leave Robinvale by 5pm to be there in time. At 4pm Mark abruptly realised he had not changed his watch from South Australian time and the actual time was 4.30pm. Surprisingly we quickly found a taxi and we were at the





airport within 10 minutes. The wind-socks were almost in the same position as what we had previously witnessed. With a little bit of "Get there itis": we, or maybe more me, agreed to go. After all, there is only so much you can see in Robinvale. A quick phone call to the boys in Balranald to let them know we were on our way and we were off. The wind direction was directly down the runway. It was going to be a fun ride. Once we had left the airfield it was a rough transition to higher levels. Once over the Murray River I tried to contact Mark. I could clearly hear him, but he could not hear me. The transmission light on my radio was not working. I do not like flying without a radio. I felt insecure knowing I could not communicate. It was like rally driving without a seat belt, swimming with sharks without a cage. Troubled by being close to the location of a previous trike pilots "Incident" my mind wandered. As long as I could see Mark, it was reassuring. "Where is Mark?" Nowhere to be seen! With the sun going down, Mark and his 100hp, fast wing P & M machine, along with the aid of a 20 knot tail wind, was gone. He was nowhere to be seen. With the Sun going down the trip to Balranald was quick. We were sitting on a minimum of 75 kts. ground speed. "At last!". When landing at Balranald the guys were there to greet us. They were surprised to see us arrive so quickly. We packed our trikes up in the dark and it was not long before we were relaxing back at the house. Our hosts once again looked after us like royalty and we sat down for dinner at the local Chinese restaurant in the RSL club. Perfect!

Our last day began early once again. It was even colder than yesterday. We thanked Don and Lynda for their hospitality once again. A quick check of the radio proved useless. I could hear, but not transmit. I advised everybody and felt okay knowing I was in a bigger group today. The trip to Deniliquin was uneventful. There is not a lot to look at

between Balranald and Deniliquin. Landing on the edge of the Hay plains in an emergency situation would be a good time to have a radio. "When have you ever heard of a 912 letting you down?" I heard a little voice say."UMMMM!" There was a light cloud base at 3,500 ft and sitting underneath created some light disturbance in the air. The Edward River brought some interest in the Landscape. It was the prelude to a much needed comfort stop landing in Deniliquin. On the ground an enquiring local pilot walked over to say hello and explained how he too was at Loxton for the fly in. After further discussion we got discussed my radio and he agreed to have a look at. It was not long before Mark and he found a broken wire in my Push to talk button. With his trusty soldering iron, wires were reattached and the transmit light on my radio was glowing with life. I was relieved and appreciative of his efforts. Yarrawonga was still one hour away and we all took off to the South East on our final leg. Tocumwal, followed by Cobram led me towards the views of Lake Mulwala. Yarrawonga beckoned, and again a safe return had been made to this regular starting point of fun and adventure.

The trip was full of many highlights. Too many to mention here. These types of trips are what trike flying is all about for me. Being part of the SMC makes it even more possible. Thanks to Mitch for his organisation of a great week and his great contacts. Also, for his well directed friendly humour. Meeting Simon and Michael and sharing their company added to the greater network of new triker friendships. Thanks to Mark and Joe for sharing the week long experience and their comradeship. And even though we did not spend a long time with Max and Chris over the week, it was a great effort by both guys to fly so far solo across some desolate countryside to share the experience of the Loxton flyin. See you there in two years time.

What's On

Jun 8 th – 10 th	Latrobe Fly-in
Jun 11 th	General Meeting with AvPlan
Jul 6 th	Wahring Field Fly-in
Jul 9 th	General Meeting
Aug 3 rd	Maintenance Day
Aug 13 th	General Meeting with BoM
Sept 10 th	General Meeting
Oct 15 th	General Meeting
Nov 2 nd – 5 th	Grampians Fly-in
Nov 12 th	General Meeting
Nov 22 nd – 24 th	Gathering of the Moths
Dec 10 th	Xmas break-up Meeting





FOR SALE

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Wing: Cruze

Hours: 280, Will fly til sold.

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This would be a great toy for anyone who likes the more exposed feeling of flying without a pod or a first time flyer, training bars are included so you can even take instruction in it as I did and reduce the cost of your training.

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