

Established in 1990, Sharp Airlines is a regional airline with operations stretching across Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. With its headquarters in Hamilton, Victoria, the locally-owned business carries approximately 100,000 passengers a year between eight locations.



Locally owned

Around 70 staff and a fleet of 15 aircraft transport passengers, freight, post and essential services between major cities and surrounding regional areas.



Experience counts

Sharp's airline pilot cadet course is the longest-running of its kind in Australia and guarantees graduates a 9-month cadetship on completion of their studies.



NWDF value

Total value of NWDF program to date:
\$550,000



SHARP AIRLINES

Case studies of transport and logistics enterprises and real-life accounts of how they have benefited from upskilling their workforce.

For more information about how TLISC can assist, please contact our Workforce Development team:

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SHARP AIRLINES

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"The nature of the industry is that, as their experience and flying hours increase, they will be offered work with the national and international carriers," she says.

But with help from the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council (TLISC), Sharp is putting the pilot shortage and their regional location to best advantage by delivering training under the National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF).

Managing director/chief pilot Malcolm Sharp and director/chief instructor Peter Sobey founded Sharp Airlines in their Victorian hometown of Hamilton in 1990.

Two men and a plane have grown to 70 staff and fleet of 15 craft flying freight, post and passengers to three southern states, and to Flinders Island exclusively.

The growing business created the opportunity for a flying school, as Sharp must employ 12-14 junior pilots as First Officers annually to meet operational needs.

Sharp is also a registered training organisation (RTO) with 28 trainees who, in 18 months, complete a Certificate IV in Aviation (Commercial Pilot Aeroplane

Licence) and Diploma of Aviation (Instrument Flight Operations) before successfully graduating into Sharp's employment.

TLISC's assistance has been essential to the training model, as they developed the national qualifications as well as brokering the all-important NWDF funding.

"One of the things we've been having trouble with out here, and we're getting over now, and this is where the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council has come into it, is that we are a long way away from the experts," Peter Sobey says, "in human factors, crew resource management and safety in particular.

"At great expense, we'd had to bring trainers in from capital cities, because that is where the expertise was. But with the assistance that TLISC has given, we have been able to upskill our workforce and to teach with authority in those subjects, which was something we could not do before. That's been critical to us.

"In having our own staff teach it, we can put the Sharp slant on everything, so it means more to our pilots, and it means more to Sharp, and our clients as well."

The NWDF funding helped lessen the cost impost of training, which allowed Sharp to redirect capital towards the purchase of a sophisticated flight simulator.

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"It is a lot better to practise engine failures in a good quality simulator than to actually have to do it up in the air," Helen Sobey says. "Anything to do with aviation is expensive: training is expensive; maintenance is expensive. Every screw on every engine, every piece of that aircraft, has to be tracked and traced."

"It is very expensive," Peter Sobey agrees, "but we can't keep putting the training price up every year. It would just add to the problem of the pilot skills shortage.

"So TLISC's support has been brilliant in that we've maintained our prices for next year and it's in part due to that support. It's absolutely wonderful."

The enterprise benefit of upskilling Sharp is also to Hamilton's advantage.

The country town of some 10,100 residents, where the Glenelg and Henty Highways intersect, is at western Victoria's geographical heart, and Sharp is pumping vital legal, commercial, community and energy services into its veins.

"The council has mentioned on many occasions how, by having an airline here, they have been able to encourage business back into the town," Peter Sobey says.

"One of the biggest industries in Hamilton is Iluka Mining, and Iluka would never ever have come to Hamilton without Sharp. One of their criteria was that they had a regional airline here to fly in and out management and staff and expertise.

"By talking to the chief executive of the Hamilton Base Hospital, I know the support that Sharp has been able to give them just by being able to transfer, on a daily basis, expertise to what is a fairly major regional hospital here in town.

"Not only do we bring them into the town, but we've also taken some ... to other centres. Most business people now, they want to be down and back in a day. The people in PowerCorp, Centrelink, our major hospital ... all of those industries use our airline to travel to Melbourne or Adelaide or wherever it might be."

Sharp also offers critical aerial support to environment and emergency services, including the Country Fire Authority, and police in search and rescue operations.

"We're local boys and we're very proud of the fact that the town where we were raised has its own airline, and the town is very proud, too," Peter Sobey says.