Women of Aviation
Women in Aviation, is a nonprofit organisation dedicated to the encouragement and advancement of women in all aviation career fields and interests. There are over 11,000 members that include astronauts, corporate pilots, maintenance technicians, air traffic controllers, business owners, educators, journalists, flight attendants, high school and university students, air show performers, airport managers and many others.

WIA provide year-round resources to assist women in aviation and to encourage young women to consider aviation as a career. WAI also offers educational outreach programs to educators, aviation industry members and young people nationally and internationally. Our most recent initiative is our Girls in Aviation Day program for girls ages 8 - 16.

In addition, WAI promotes public understanding of the accomplishments and contributions of women in aviation. This includes historic notables such as Amelia Earhart, Bessie Coleman, Eileen Collins, Jeana Yeager, Nicole Malachowski and many others.

About this publication
This publication has been put together in conjunction with Basair Aviation College, Sydney Aviators and Hunter Valley Aviation.

We would like to thank all of the alumni of Basair Aviation College, and pilots with Sydney Aviators and Hunter Valley Aviation, who have contributed their stories with the aim of encouraging more women into this wonderful industry.

All women who are interested in being involved in aviation are encouraged to come and attend one of the events planned during the week.
Charter Pilot

For most pilots in Australia, their first job is in General Aviation - doing charter or scenic work. These roles are typically in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia, although there are roles available in other states.

This is a great opportunity to improve piloting skills and command decision making.

New pilots typically spend 2-3 years in a charter role, before moving on to an airline.

Natalia Kassem
Certificate IV in Aviation & Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

I am based out of Weipa and here we fly a lot of passenger charters with a clientele including teachers, students, doctors, social workers, miners, tradesmen and also locals.

We fly mainly around the communities throughout the Cape and also up into the islands of the Torres Strait. The landscape and reefs in this part of Australia provide an amazing view. It does get quite busy in the wet season as there is a lot of flooding blocking transport by road.

We also fly freight, for most of the year flying live crayfish from Horn Island down to Cairns where they get put into tanks before getting transported overseas. At certain times of the year picking these crays up from PNG gives us a taste of international operations.

We also do aerial work, spotting prawns that get flushed out of the rivers into the Gulf of Carpenteria. Occasionally we help out with search and rescue operations.

Rhianna Binder
Certificate IV in Aviation & Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College


After working as an instructor for a short period of time, I was offered a job with Westwing flying Kingairs and Caravans in remote West QLD, Cairns, Townsville and The Gulf.

The experience has been fantastic. I enjoy flying the aircraft in the Westwing fleet, and the challenges of difficult weather conditions and balancing commercial pressures have greatly improved my command decision making skills.
Samantha Gilan
Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

I have always wanted to be a pilot, but there was no government funding options when I was starting flight training. Therefore, I started slowly with a flight a week while I worked as an aviation engineer to pay for it.

I felt I was not progressing as swiftly as I wanted, so I decided to join the Navy as a cadet pilot. It turned out to be a great decision, as the training the Navy gave me was excellent. The skills I learnt in aircraft handling, airmanship and professionalism I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I loved training in the PC-9, which was the most advanced single-engine turbo-prop trainer in the world. Although I met a lot of inspiring women in the armed forces, who were enjoying exciting careers. I decided the Navy was not for me and I discharged to pursue a career in civil aviation.

I completed my Commercial Pilot Licence conversion, and because of my military training, I decided to complete an aerobatics rating. I also worked as a charter pilot for a short time. However, my aim was to teach, so I soon completed a Flight Instructor Rating. I now work for Basair Aviation College as a full-time flight instructor.

I love teaching students the skills that I have learnt, and helping them on their first steps in a career in aviation. I enjoyed the aerobatics training I did in the Navy, and the next step in my career is to specialise in aerobatics training for civil aviation trainee pilots.

The adrenaline of aerobatics flights, the satisfaction of seeing a student progress, and the opportunity to fly almost every day has given me a lot of satisfaction in my career. I would certainly recommend a career in aviation.

Maisy Sandry
Certificate IV in Aviation & Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

After I qualified as a Commercial Pilot, I knew that I wanted instructing to be my next career step.

I have met many women who are, or have been, instructors as part of their career - and I can see how women with empathy, patience and excellent communication skills can excel as teachers.

There are certainly some challenging days as an instructor, but with each challenge I can see that I have become a better pilot as well as a better leader and coach of others.

As an instructor at Basair Aviation College, I enjoy the lifestyle of a 9-to-5 job, but the pleasure of being able to regularly fly as well.
Seaplane Pilot

Working as a seaplane pilot is idyllic; typically excellent weather conditions, located in a holiday destination plus the challenge of maintaining a small aircraft.

While many pilots use their experience as a seaplane pilot as a stepping stone in their careers, others are attracted to the lifestyle and stay for the enjoyment.

Priyanka Manuja
Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

I am the Captain on a Cessna Caravan, with floats. I love being a seaplane pilot. I enjoy the responsibility of looking after an aircraft (I fly it more than anybody else!)

I also enjoy the customer service aspects of my job. Almost all my customers are on holiday, and they want a fun but relaxing experience.

It is the best job for matching lifestyle with a professional role.

Sure, several are surprised that I am so young (I started this role when I was only 20 years old), but even in a relaxed atmosphere I always ensure I am professional (checking fuel, inspecting the aircraft, being on-time) which gives my customers confidence.

Business Jet Pilot

Being a pilot on a business jet has the benefit of a varied lifestyle - each flight can be to different destinations and rosters vary from week to week.

Bree Linton
Certificate IV in Aviation, Diploma of Aviation & Advanced Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

I started flying while I was still at high school and began my first flying job within a year of graduating. I have had a variety of jobs instructing, flying survey and charter and as a Captain for a regional airline.

I now fly a LearJet for Careflight, which is a dream job! We conduct medical evacuations for sick and injured people throughout Australia and overseas. We regularly fly to Fiji, Vanuatu, Bali, the Philippines, even as far as Hawaii! Every day is completely different - we never know where our next destination will be!

Flying corporate jets is challenging and enjoyable. Unlike the airlines that have control centres providing assistance and making many of the decisions, we are responsible for everything from flight planning, refuelling, immigration and diversions. I enjoy the autonomy and urgency involved in the role.

As I started flying at a young age, flying solo for the first time at 16, I have always been young for the positions I held. Working as a Captain, I have had male first officers aged in their 40s, which sparked some interesting and encouraging comments from passengers and other crew!

There are many different career options and lifestyles in aviation. For me, flying medevacs is a rewarding career with an adventurous lifestyle.
This report, future potential ladies of aviation, comes to you from a villa in Ibiza. Where I am taking a rest from my apartment in Italy. Because due in no small part to my career choice, I find myself in the most stressful situation of working 3/4 of the year from the fabulous cultural centre that is northern Italy and spending my winter in my other investment interest, namely a business venture in the Mediterranean island of Ibiza (last year I took 2 months off to backpack around New Zealand and Japan... life is hard).

I'm going to attempt a brief synopsis of life as a lady pilot: it is rewarding, exciting, adventurous, etc etc as you have undoubtedly heard from career advice-type people. It is also exhausting (hello 4 a.m. alarms and has-anyone-seen-my-body-clock-I-lost-it-in-Sweden-many-years-ago), socially disruptive (what do you mean, meet on a Saturday night, dear friends, you know my window of sociability this week is strictly a Tuesday-to-Thursday affair) and most inevitably guaranteed to include interactions with sleazy, (possibly many times) divorced middle-aged men (read: airline captains) who genuinely want your technical help to adjust the light-bulb in their hotel room.

Let me be clear, I LOVE my job. I actually get out of bed at 4 (perhaps 4.10) a.m. and go “whooo!!” Flying planes, is (assuming you have the passion for it), awesome. Adrenaline, g-force, travel... all in a day’s work.

I started out my flight training with a Diploma of Aviation with Basair Aviation College in Sydney. They gave me an excellent foundation in training, and the option to take the aircraft away for flyways truly enhanced the experience.

On graduation, I travelled to Europe where I converted my licences. This required retaking the CPL and ME CIR flight tests, as well as the European ATPLs. Not the most fun you can have with a whizzwheel (flight planning calculator thingy) but hey, this can be done in about 8 months to 1 year and then you’re good to go in Europe (assuming Euro visas are all good).

At that time, Ryanair (major recruiter of low hour pilots to fly Boeing 737s in what can reasonably be called a European aviation market invasion) were recruiting and I achieved a successful assessment and interview with them. I chose them over other offers (yes, a low hour pilot in Europe has a ridiculous scope of choice. You people get koalas and endless sunshine, we get major airlines recruiting 200hr newbies. Deal with it). So after a 6 week type rating in Sweden (caution: this newbie recruitment comes at a price, jet type rating are self-funded. This is fine so long as you have a reasonable job offer at the end of it, and trust me it pays off. Hellooo Italy-Ibiza-Italy-Ibiza-Italy-<insert random country name>)

The other benefit of joining a young, rapidly expanding company was the opportunity for progression. So at around 3,500 hours I started the upgrade training to become a captain, and about 2 years ago I became a commander.

Some training captains will give you a harder time because you’re female - give them a hard time back (they’re just not used to it and I’ve never met one that persisted with misogyny when confronted), others will go easier on you for the same reason - push them to train you properly if you really care.

This is an amazing job, and the requirements are not gender-specific. Yes, there will be the older captain whose arm you may threaten to break when he refuses to release his iron grip on your waist, but there will also be the wonderful Italian baggage handlers who ensure you never have to lift your own luggage (damn right I can lift myself but it would be rude to refuse) and above all else there are the sunrises over the Adriatic Coast, the views of the Aurora Borealis, the close-ups of volcanic eruptions, the thrill of making a successful landing with winds gusting over 60mph (it’s what we call summer in Ireland, ahem) and the fact that it’s a cliche but damn, we really do have the best office in the world.

We just need more ladies to make it...smell better.... Come on ladies, adventure awaits.

Elizabeth Malone
Captain, Boeing 737-800
RyanAir
Regional Airline Pilot

Airlines such as QANTASLink, AirNorth, Brindabella Airlines and Regional Express are all regional airlines.

Flights are all domestic, and crew typically return to their home base each day. This gives a much steadier lifestyle.

Smaller aircraft are used, such as ATR-72, Saab Dash 8s and other turbo-props, although some have small jets like the A320 and Embarer Brasilia.

Katharine Harding
Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College
I am currently working for Airnorth based in Darwin as a First Officer on the Embraer Brasilia.

After finishing my training, I worked as an instructor and then a charter pilot with Australia By Air. The experience as an instructor and charter pilot in a Piper Chieftain helped me get a job flying the Brasilia. Moving to AirNorth was a huge step to take in my career - but one I believe will provide me with a variety of experience and open more doors in the future.

Working in a multi crew environment is certainly different to single-pilot operations in charter, but working with good crew just adds to the joy of the job.

Aviation is still a male dominated industry but if you’re willing to put in the hard work and effort to achieve your goals you can do anything that a man can do and be successful at it.

The sense of accomplishment and success is what keeps me motivated and knowing that I have earned the respect of experienced pilots is something that I am proud of.

The joy of flying, for me, is not only the freedom of being in the air and having a bird’s eye view of the world, it’s working alongside of some great people, continually learning and building experience and being successful.
International Airline Pilot

For many, being a Captain of an international flight is their career aspiration.

Working for an international airline means you are able to travel the world, and fly the biggest aircraft on the market.

Kathleen Watts
Advanced Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College
I started my flight training with the Airforce Cadets at 15 years of age. I enjoyed it so much, I soon realised I wanted to pursue aviation as a career.

I am currently a Second Officer on Boeing 747s. I fly to destinations such as London, Frankfurt, Singapore, Bangkok, Narita, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Los Angeles and Dallas.

The international travel has been amazing, and I have made the most of visiting so many wonderful cities. There are not many jobs that provide such an experience.

Prior to joining an airline, I was an instructor at Basair Aviation College. I enjoyed instructing so much that I continue to do it in my spare time with the Air Force cadets. I love introducing people to aviation and helping them achieve their goal of learning to fly.

I hope to undertake First Officer training on the Boeing 737 in early 2014, and eventually get a command seat as I want to show my new baby daughter just what I can achieve.

If you enjoy adventure and challenges, then I strongly recommend a career in aviation for you.

Aishwarya Kakkar
Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College
I started my flight training as soon as I finished High School.

It was a bit of a challenge initially to take on such a male-dominated profession - however it has been very rewarding. I get many compliments from passengers, co-workers and friends.

I now fly a Boeing 737NG to Bankgkok, Mumabi, Delhi and Chennai.

The sound of the engine gives me a huge adrenaline rush and the beautiful sunrises and sunsets I see from my cockpit window makes me fall for flying every time. Even now, I always look up when I hear an aircraft overhead.

It’s a dream profession - and I hope more women join aviation and be part of it.
International Destinations

With a Commercial Pilot Licence, you can travel the world for a career.

Many women take the opportunity to have careers outside of Australia, settling around the world.

Kali Reid
Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

I am currently a First Officer with Honk Kong Airlines, and getting close to my Captain upgrade.

I am based in Hong Kong, and I love the lifestyle of being an international pilot and living in such an amazing city.

When I completed my training, I wanted to experience charter flying and headed to Broome, WA in search of a job. I easily found work flying a C210 for a company called Geikie Skyways, where I worked as a line pilot operating out of Fitzroy Crossing. It was a fun, but difficult, experience as I was living and running the operation out of a caravan, taking bookings and flying around the Kimberley region.

After a year I moved to Darwin to join Australasian Jet and fly twin-engine aircraft such as the C310 and PA31. Here my role was flying passengers and freight, being the scenic flight co-ordinator and doing passenger check-ins. After 1 year of working there the company closed its doors so I was left with no job. I found a job shortly after flying the larger C402 in Sydney for Australian Aerial surveys. Here I worked for 6 months doing aerial survey and photography flights before getting my first jet job with Tiger Airways in Singapore on an A320.

After 2 years with Tiger Airways I moved to Hong Kong and started working for Hong Kong Airlines on the A330.

Nikola Labes
Advanced Diploma of Aviation, Basair Aviation College

Aviation can be an extremely rewarding career, as there are so many challenges on offer.

My first job was with a sky-diving company in Melbourne. It was a great experience, as the commercial pressure of getting as many flights up and down in a day meant I had to be efficient - as well as always friendly with the customers. However, once I had met this challenge, I was quickly after something new.

When I was a student, I had been very impressed with my instructors. Training students in theory as well as flying would improve my own skills, so my next step was a flight instructor rating. I landed a job straight away, and instructing helped me develop skills beyond piloting and theory.

I then took a job in Darwin, flying a Cessna 210 and then a twin-engine aircraft. We would be flying in and out of remote communities in the middle of nowhere, dirt strips and crazy weather. Darwin had such a great pilot community - at times I felt like I was in a university village with BBQs and events always on offer with like-minded friends. It was great.

I am a Kiwi, and as a kid I always wanted to fly with the national carrier. So recently I have returned home to fly the ATR-72. It is another challenge that I enjoy every day!
Flying for Fun

There are thousands of women who learn to fly just for fun.

It is a great challenge, that builds skills such as decision making and leadership, as well as knowledge of meteorology, aerodynamics and aircraft systems.

It takes many people about a year to get a Private Pilot Licence when they are flying just on weekends and holidays.

Christine Wright
Recreational Pilot, Sydney Aviators

I have been flying for 3.5 years and hold a Private Pilot’s Licence. I have never had so much fun!

I really enjoyed the study and challenge of learning a new skill. There are organisations such as Australian Women Pilots’ Association which offer scholarships to assist in your flight training.

Oh the places you’ll go! …like Hamilton Island (do an image search for Hamilton Island runway)… the Birdsville Races…Lightning Ridge and the underground hotel at White Cliffs….Aviation Airshows in Avalon, Temora, Watts Bridge.

Closer to home, a flight to Mudgee for lunch at the winery next to the airport will really impress your friends and family!

Be prepared to make lots of new pilot friends in your aviation pursuit as we all share the passion for aviation. I have made lots of friends at Sydney Aviators over a cappuccino and a conversation about today’s flight of fancy.

Don’t put it off like I did. Start flying today!

Beth Parkin
Recreational Pilot, Sydney Aviators

Like a lot of people I received my Trial Instructional Flight for a Birthday Gift.

I instantly fell in love with flying and thought ‘I’ve got to do this!’ Two years later I’m flying solo and getting close to my PPL.

My inspiration came from my Dad, who was an Aeronautical Engineer with McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing), for 35 years. Flying gives me a great sense of achievement and freedom.

My long term ambition is to fly for Angel Flight and perhaps even get my Flight Instructor Rating.

Daniela Stock
Recreational Pilot, Sydney Aviators

I started flying at Easter time in 2012. After a few awesome fly-aways to Birdsville and Sydney surrounds flying has become my number one priority.

I suddenly have no time for anything else and my (strained) colleagues will assure you that I don’t talk about anything else.

I will definitely keep going!
Bankstown Airport Campus - NSW
628/23-25 Airport Avenue
Bankstown Airport NSW 2200
Ph: (02) 9791 0111 Fax: (02) 9791 0065

Cessnock Airport Campus - NSW
Terminal Building
Cessnock Airport NSW 2325
Ph: (02) 4991 6500 Fax: (02) 4991 6499

Archerfield Airport Campus - QLD
Building 9, Grenier Drive,
Archerfield Airport QLD 4108
Ph: (07) 3270 2400 Fax: (02) 9791 0065

www.basair.edu.au | fly@basair.edu.au