

FOREWORD

As a Commonwealth government authority, CASA must ensure that its decision-making processes are effective, fair, timely, transparent, consistent, properly documented and otherwise in accordance with the requirements of the law.

Most of the regulatory decisions CASA makes are such that conformity with authoritative policy and established procedures will be conducive to the achievement of these outcomes. From time to time, however, decision-makers will encounter situations in which the strict application of policy, in the making of a decision involving the exercise of discretion, would not be appropriate. Indeed, in some cases, the inflexible application of policy may itself be unlawful.

This preface and the following Introduction, explains the way in which the policy and processes set out in this manual are to be used by all CASA's personnel when making decisions in the performance of their functions, the exercise of their powers and the discharge of their duties. It also explains the processes to be followed if it appears that a departure from policy is necessary or appropriate.

Mandatory Use of Policy and Procedure Manuals

This manual is one of the set of manuals and other documents which comprise CASA's authorised document set. The authorised document set contains the policy, processes and procedures with which CASA personnel are expected to comply when performing assigned tasks. All CASA personnel are required to have regard to the policies set out in this manual. Except as described in the Introduction, CASA decision-makers should not depart from these policies, processes and procedures.



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INTRODUCTION

Regulatory Decision Making

Where the legislation provides for one, and only one, decision—the “correct” decision—is the only decision open to the CASA. However, most of the decisions CASA makes involve the exercise of discretion. In such cases, there may well be more than one acceptable or correct decision. In these cases, the law requires that CASA makes the “preferable” decision, that is, the most appropriate decision, having regard to the overriding interests of safety and the obligation to be fair.

In all such cases, CASA is bound to act in accordance with the applicable rules of administrative law. These rules govern how CASA arrives at the ‘preferable’ decision in any given case. Adherence to these rules is a requirement, not an option. Decisions and actions taken in contravention of these rules are unlawful, unenforceable, and in most cases invalid. CASA is legally accountable for the decisions it makes, and CASA decision-makers are obliged to avoid the appearance, as much as the reality, of unlawful decision-making.

Sound and lawful regulatory decision-making is generally governed by the 10 rules of administrative law summarised below. Adherence to these rules is essential to CASA’s obligations of accountability and good governance.

1. **Natural Justice** (Procedural Fairness)
 - **Hearing Rule.** Persons affected by CASA’s decisions have a right to be heard. To be meaningful, the hearing rule normally requires that CASA provides persons with notice (usually in advance) that a particular decision is going to be taken, and the reasons for the decision CASA proposes to take. Without notice and a statement of reasons, there may be little point to providing a person with an opportunity to be heard.
 - **Rule Against Bias.** Decision-makers should not have a **personal** or **pecuniary interest** in the outcome of their decisions. Neither may decision-makers prejudge (or **pre-determine**) matters in respect of which they are called upon to make a decision.
2. A decision-maker must not act for **improper purposes**. Even if the purposes for which a particular decision are lawful, the decision may only be taken for the purposes specifically authorised by the law under which the decision has been taken.
3. A decision-maker must not take any **irrelevant considerations** into account in coming to a decision.
4. A decision-maker must take all **relevant considerations** into account in coming to a decision.

Note: Applicable Policy Is Always A Relevant Consideration.

5. A decision-maker must act on the basis of **evidence**, not mere supposition or speculation.
6. A decision-maker must not formulate requirements in **vague** or **uncertain terms**.
7. A decision-maker must not **inflexibly apply policy** (although departures from policy will normally need to be justified).
8. A decision-maker must not **act under dictation** (although this does not preclude adherence to formal directions, compliance with lawful conditions in relation to the process by which a decision is taken or the obligation to consult in the process of considering a decision).
9. A decision-maker must decide the matter within a **reasonable time**.
10. A decision maker must not act in a way that is manifestly **unreasonable**. A decision must not be so unreasonable that no reasonable person would make such a decision.

Note: The meaning and application of these principles, and related considerations of administrative law, are covered more fully in the induction and orientation training undertaken by all casa employees. Any questions in relation to these matters should be referred to the Legal Services Division.

Departure from Authorised Policy

Adherence to CASA's authorised policies will almost always produce an appropriate decision. As said, however, from time to time there will be circumstances in which the strict application of policy may not result in the "preferable" decision. In these cases it may be appropriate (and possibly necessary) to depart from otherwise applicable policy.

Any departure from policy must be justified in order to ensure that it:

- Is genuinely necessary in the interests of fairness
- Does not inappropriately compromise the need for consistent decision-making; and, of course
- Is not in conflict with the interests of safety.

Without fettering a decision-maker's discretion, it is therefore expected that appropriate consultation will occur before a decision is made that is not the product of the policies and processes set out in this manual. The prescribed consultation process is described below.

Consultation Process

Decision-Maker's Responsibilities

When a decision-maker believes there is a need to depart from policy he or she is expected to consult with his or her direct supervisor. This process should be initiated in writing:

- Setting out the pertinent facts and circumstances
- Identifying the provisions of the policy normally applicable
- Stating why the application of that policy would not result in the making of the "preferable" decision in the circumstances to hand
- Specifying the approach the decision-maker believes is more likely to result in a "preferable" decision.

Supervisor's Responsibilities

In considering a consultative referral, the decision-maker's supervisor should:

- Advise the decision-maker as to whether his or her assessment of the relevant considerations appears to be complete and correct
- If, in the opinion of the supervisor, the circumstances do not warrant a departure from policy, provide the decision-maker with written advice and guidance as to how the decision might more properly be approached within the current policy framework

Note: Reliance on relevant precedent is a sound basis on which to ground such an opinion. It may also be helpful to seek advice from peers, superiors and/or CASA's Legal Services Division.

- If, in the opinion of the supervisor, a departure from policy is warranted, the supervisor should ensure the policy sponsor (normally the relevant Executive Manager) is advised of:
 - i. The intention to depart from the otherwise applicable policy
 - ii. The alternative approach the decision-maker will be taking to the matter.

The supervisor should ensure that a full written record of these actions is made and maintained.

Note: In no case may the terms of decision be dictated to a delegate authorised to exercise discretionary decision-making powers.

If a decision-maker's supervisor or the policy sponsor is not satisfied that the decision the decision-maker intends to make is the correct or preferable decision in all the circumstances, responsibility for that decision should be assumed by, or assigned to, another authorised delegate in accordance with appropriate processes and procedures.

Policy Sponsor's Responsibilities

If the policy sponsor concurs in the proposed departure from policy, he or she should ensure the decision-maker is advised accordingly as soon as possible.

If the policy sponsor does not believe the proposed departure from policy is warranted, he or she should:

- Advise the supervisor accordingly
- Assume responsibility for the decision
- Ensure that the decision-maker and any person affected by the decision (for which the policy sponsor has assumed responsibility) is advised accordingly
- Make the decision in a manner consistent with the applicable policy.

The policy sponsor should ensure that a full written record of these actions is made and maintained.

Nothing in these processes should be interpreted or applied so as to dictate the terms of the decision to be made by a decision-maker authorised to make discretionary decisions under the civil aviation legislation, or to delay unreasonably the making of such decisions.

Revisions to Policies and Manuals

As a result of experience in applying policies and procedures, users will form views as to accuracy, relevance and applicability of the content.

CASA personnel are required to provide recommendations for revisions to policies and processes in this or any other manual should they become aware of shortcomings. In this way the policies and manuals will be continually improved and remain relevant to the tasks being undertaken.

Each policy and manual has a sponsor and recommendations for amendment are to be forwarded to the relevant individual for consideration. The revision process can be accessed via the link:

http://casaconnect/manuals/doc_control/process.htm