



FUNDING ACQUITTAL REPORT

Civil Aviation Safety Authority, Hang Gliding Federation of Australia, New South Wales Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, Victorian Hang gliding Association, South Australian Hang gliding Association, Western Australian Hang Gliding association, ACT Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, Canungra Hang gliding Club, Cairns Hang Gliding Club.



Helen McKerral on behalf of the Organising Committee:
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FRONT COVER: The whole She-Bang - WWW3 Pilots, Drivers, Instructors and Mentors

REPORT ON WWW2 FOR MAJOR FUNDING BODIES

1. RATIONALE:

The aims of the event were to increase confidence, skills and to promote safe decision-making in a fun, supportive, collaborative environment without the pressure of competition. Skill improvement increases confidence, but pilots lacking in confidence usually learn poorly in pressure situations; WWW²'s rationale and structure were to provide a safe, supportive environment to increase confidence so that learning and skills (launch, landing, XC technique) could more easily grow. Integral to this process was for each pilot to recognise, accept and trust her own individual journey in flying, to set her own goals, and to give her the confidence to resist the peer pressure and expectations (external and internal) that so often divert us in unproductive directions.

Women make up just 6% of the Australian HG & PG population. They make up 16% in skydiving, so we can improve. Despite a few naysayers who during the planning stages dismissed the value of funding our event, the information we initially received from Janice Crosswhite (president of the Australian WomenSport & Recreation Association) on retaining women in male-dominated sports proved to be correct. And as predicted by research on women in sport, the format and single-sex nature of WWW² was highly effective in attracting female pilots.

The competition environment at club, state and National level in hang gliding and paragliding is well-established in Australia. However, many pilots enjoy flying XC and tasks but are intimidated by competition environments; indeed, many pilots of both sexes never become interested in competition, but still want to improve their XC flying. The safe, supportive, collaborative and fun environment of a Skills Clinic provided a stepping stone in confidence and XC skills for those who feel they are not yet ready for competition, or those who simply aren't interested in competition. With the inclusion of highly skilled mentors, there was also plenty for confident, Advanced-rated pilots to gain.

To promote further such events, the WWW2 committee is creating a package of the budget, templates, registration forms, handbooks, debrief recommendations, this report, etc, and will make it available free of charge to anyone anywhere in the world who wants to run a similar (not-for-profit) event. We offer a copy of the package to be held and stored by the HGFA and CASA, as the format may also be useful for female glider and skydiving pilots (indeed, a WWW2 attendee who is also a skydiving instructor has already begun planning a women's-only skydiving event). We hold copyright of the logo but will make it available upon request to anyone who is running a non-profit, Women's only free-flying, gliding, microlighting, paramotoring, or skydiving *skills clinic* (but not competition or fly-in).

2. PRE-EVENT PLANNING:

Planning began in March 2010. We consulted Carolyn Dennis, organiser of Women with Wings 1 (2006), and established a committee of four hang glider and two paraglider pilots. On the basis of her experience at WWW1, where only participant/ committee safety officers were in attendance, Carolyn recommended that instructors be included to ensure the low hour pilots would advance in a safe environment.

In May-Jul 2010, extensive consultation was done via club forums, websites, Soaring Oz, and online surveys, as to preferred location, duration, time of year, programme and workshop options, instructors etc. (Appendix A). We used the 55 responses to the online survey, as well as remuneration rates quoted by instructors, to determine location, duration & time of year that would suit the largest number of pilots. Drivers and highly skilled mentors (paid via honoraria) were also essential. WWW2 also budgeted for a babysitter, but as no registrants brought children, and participant numbers were higher than anticipated, we hired a third driver instead. We avoided the peak summer holiday period because of higher accommodation expenses, the proliferation of other flying events, and thermic conditions that could be daunting for low airtime pilots.

3. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Funding was sought from the HGFA, CASA, Clubs and Associations. We aimed to keep registration fees as low as possible, so we wanted this funding to cover fixed instructor, mentor & driver fees. Because we were offering such low remuneration rates, we wanted to cover mentors' and instructors' accommodation, travel and meal expenses to acknowledge their generosity and to ensure they did not end up out-of-pocket.

The registration fee of \$95 covered welcoming barbeque (\$25), NEVHGC membership (\$25), Presentation Dinner (\$25) plus a T-shirt (\$15). [The presentation dinner ended up more expensive but was subsidised by the pizza night]. This left a surplus of just \$5/head. Most participants registered at the earlybird rate, but a number of late registrants paid \$115 and \$120. In hindsight, this \$5 buffer was too small, but the T-shirts were co-sponsored, reducing our costs and keeping our event in the black. A registration fee of \$120 would improve budget certainty (Appendix C: Budget Actuals).

Of course, many instructors run various excellent and valuable skills clinics for small group of 5-10 pilots, but these clinics are often \$1,000+ for a week of mentoring. Clearly, these costs discourage many pilots from improving their skills.

Budgeting was extremely challenging because we expected anything between 25-40 participants, but the above format ensured that per head expenditure would not blow out.

Most of all, budgeting was challenging because there appeared to be no standard structure or certainty for applying for funds from the HGFA for National Events; even though female pilot development is both in the strategic plan and budget, there seemed to be no way to access the funds!

HGFA offered \$1500, but only if it was matched by (host) State funding. The host state agreed, but offered only \$500, with the rest to come from the other "big" states, NSW & Qld. Qld devolves its funding to clubs, and said we must approach their three biggest clubs. In the meantime, there were complaints that the smaller states and territories should fund the event as well, so we split them equally and applied to each one also. But every state and club has different policies for funding, depending on state member participation, or location, or the nature of the event. Some states supported us, others could not because of club or association policy.

Requesting funding from HGFA, from State Associations and even from individual clubs in Queensland totalled well over one hundred hours of paperchasing to secure money for a non-profit clinic aimed solely at improving pilot skills and safety. One Australian pilot was so appalled when they heard the committee was scratching after \$120 from this Club, \$180 from that State Association, and that the committee were paying their own registration expenses at a non-profit event, that they donated \$1500 to cover committee registration fees, plus extra to spend as we saw fit.

The committee is grateful that the HGFA agreed to fund our event, but a simplified process would ensure more such skills clinics are held in Australia!

Paid registrations were received from pilots in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, ACT, NSW, South Australia and Western Australia, plus a handful from Europe and one from New Zealand. Registrations comprised both hang glider AND paraglider pilots. The organising committee comprised pilots from three different states and five different clubs. NEVHGC hosted our event as we used their sites, but was not involved in funding or planning at all. So this event is not club- or state-based, but truly national, covering two disciplines. At all times the organising committee has been transparent. We believe that it is entirely appropriate for the HGFA and State Associations to fund such non-profit national skills clinics, and we hope that the organisers of WWW3 will have an easier task in securing funding.

CASA read our proposal and, recognising its value in improving pilot skills and safety, quickly agreed to provide funding towards our event.

4. ATTENDANCE:

46 pilots registered, comprising 8 hang glider pilots and 38 paraglider pilots. Several visiting pilots attended: one from Sweden, one from Switzerland, two from Germany and one from New Zealand. Two hang glider pilots from Western Australia and far North Queensland were unable to attend at the last minute; one paraglider pilot left on the first day due to personal reasons. The online registration included questions that were essential to instructors to ensure successful mentoring (Appendix B).

RATINGS:

PG: 6 Advanced, 10 Int, 22 Restr.

HG: 4 Adv, 2 Int, 2Restr.

INSTRUCTORS AND MENTORS

Paragliding instructor: Brian Webb,

Paragliding assistant: Andrew Horchner.

Hang gliding instructor: Tony Barton

Hang Gliding mentor: Olli Barthelmes

Hang Gliding mentor: Tove Heaney (who had not been sure she could attend but joined us at late notice).

5. HGFA MEMBERSHIP OUTCOMES & IMPLICATIONS FOR MEMBER RETENTION

We publicised the availability of check flights beforehand and at least six pilots whose membership had lapsed rejoined/had check flights for this event (either in Bright or in their home state) after not flying for 18-48 months due to accidents or fear issues. Another rejoined after motherhood and a break of three years. At least one pilot had not flown since becoming licensed in December, and bought equipment specifically for the event. Many, many more said the event had rekindled their joy of flying. One said that she had been about to drop her HGFA membership but had been inspired to continue flying (see Appendix E – feedback and stories). This means at least eight pilots (out of 41 Australian registrants, or almost 20%) are now members of the HGFA purely because of WWW2. Being able to advance skills in a *safe* environment – ie, supported by instructors – was clearly a key factor for many of the Restricted pilots' decision to attend. This may or may not be the case for male pilots.

However, the feedback suggests that a skills clinic of this kind may fill an important gap in the development of not just Australian women pilots, but potentially pilots of both genders (but research clearly indicates that women's-only events are more effective than mixed events in attracting women in male-dominated sports, and should therefore be retained). After gaining their licence, pilots develop within the club environment, but these environments vary enormously in the level and nature of support they provide, with some being more or less suited to various personality types or skill sets. New pilots gradually accumulate skills and progress through Intermediate to Advanced ratings, but there is a glaring absence of intensive further training after initial licensing within the HGFA framework other than particular endorsements and theory tests. The instructors present at the Clinic witnessed the value of the event in retaining members and the HGFA Board may wish to discuss with them implications for improving member retention rates. One idea may be to make cheap skills clinics available to pilots six months to one year after their initial training, or if they have had a lapsed membership of a certain period. If it is true that pilots retained in the sport for two years are more likely to remain long-term, then perhaps it would be highly cost-effective to target extra funding within that period of their development.

The HGFA spent \$1500 on 41 Australian pilots ie \$36/head – clearly cost effective not only for membership renewals generated, but for positive safety outcomes (see below). The committee had no way of knowing how many pilots would attend, but even if it had been halved, \$72/head would still be excellent value for money.

6. SAFETY OUTCOMES

Central to the rationale of WWW2 was to provide an environment that was as overtly safe as possible for pilots of every level to advance their skills and confidence – hence the presence of instructors, not just mentors. Injuries included one corked thigh and one bruised thigh (PG launches) and one broken arm (HG landing, no glider damage). Incidents were one tree landing. Considering the number of pilots, flights, and the high proportion of low-airtime pilots, this is a very positive outcome.

Safety was covered expressly, in parachute repack sessions and theory workshops, in initial safety briefings and on launch and LZs by instructors, but was also intrinsic in the improvement of launch and landing technique, in reading and understanding local weather conditions, in outlanding safely, and numerous other practical skills. One instructor noted that *'the overall goal of developing skill levels and confidence levels was achieved, even more than I expected'*. (Appendix E). Improvement in PG launch technique overall was so significant during the week that it was obvious even to hang glider pilots!

Other safety outcomes related to the identification of outdated and even dangerous equipment – one pilot had to use another wing when experienced pilots and instructors identified serious porosity issues on the first day. Various line issues were also identified. Other pilots are already buying new (safer) harnesses after tolerating poor equipment for too long. A serious tuning issue was identified with one of the hang gliders and, although it was not able to be corrected during the clinic, the owner is ensuring the issue is fixed at the factory. One recommendation for WWW3 is to include porosity testing of paragliders at a modest charge.(Recommendations, Appendix D).

Although the Human Factors workshop was replaced by actual airtime, most of the issues were covered in workshops on dealing with fear and secret women's business that identified conditions where pilots' decision making could be adversely affected by family/home/stress/peer pressure etc. Dealing with Fear also encouraged pilots to visualise in advance difficult situations (many examples given, from large clouds, gust fronts, trees etc) and to mentally plan their response beforehand to reduce potential for "freezing up". The Fear workshop teaches pilots a form of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy adapted by paraglider and psychologist Heike Hamann. The processes taught in this workshop greatly assist clear thinking and decision making when pilots are under stress, and promotes positive safety outcomes.

One recommendation (Recommendations, Appendix D) is to include Intermediate & Advanced theory workshops within the programme – a number of pilots had requested this and the instructors had agreed to do this time permitting; had there been less flying, these ratings would have happened. However, if these theory sessions are scheduled in the evening as recommended, this would be an excellent safety-promoting outcome.

Not only successes, but also incidents and close calls, were covered in daily debrief sessions as pilots were awarded "Brown Trousers" and "Koala" Certificates. The certificates may be lighthearted but, as pilots talked about their experience, – eg the tree landing –they created valuable real-life, immediate and powerful learning opportunities for other participants. Instructors and experienced pilots discussed how best to respond to these situations for optimal safety outcomes.

Also stressed was the importance of building a strong foundation of skills, and expanding one's envelope in a safe manner, and it is clear from feedback that this message was absorbed well by participants.

This event was expensive to run partly because of the necessity of full-time paid instructors and mentors (which CASA helped fund), but their contribution to the skills and safety advancements of low-airtime participants in particular is impossible to overstate.

7. PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

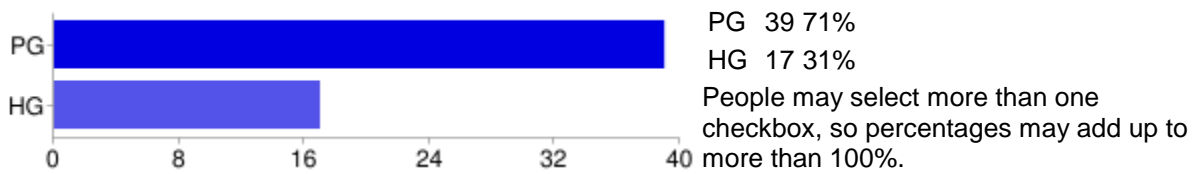
One of WWW2 participants is a publicist and put together press releases for various media. A few articles are now beginning to appear, and there were five radio interviews. We had hoped to achieve more publicity (especially photographic and television) for our sponsors, but this unfortunately did not happen. However, reports, images and articles will appear in Soaring Australia, the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association magazine and the NZ magazine, and our publicist will be able to pass on valuable information and fine-tuning to the organisers of WWW3. Reports have also been sent to the USHPGA magazine, and a translation is being done for the German magazine. I have offered Cross Country magazine a report or an article and at the time of writing am waiting to hear back from them, while Kathryn O'Riordan is also producing a movie of the event.

8. CONCLUSION

Women with Wings 2 was a successful event in the number of participants and in reaching its stated aims. The organising committee hopes that the funding bodies will support future such events.

APPENDIX A: PRE-EVENT PLANNING SURVEY

Wing



Rating HG

Restricted	6	35%
Intermediate	7	41%
Advanced	3	18%
FI	0	0%
CFI	0	0%
*My rating has lapsed but I would attend if there is provision for a check flight and re-ratification	2	12%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Rating PG

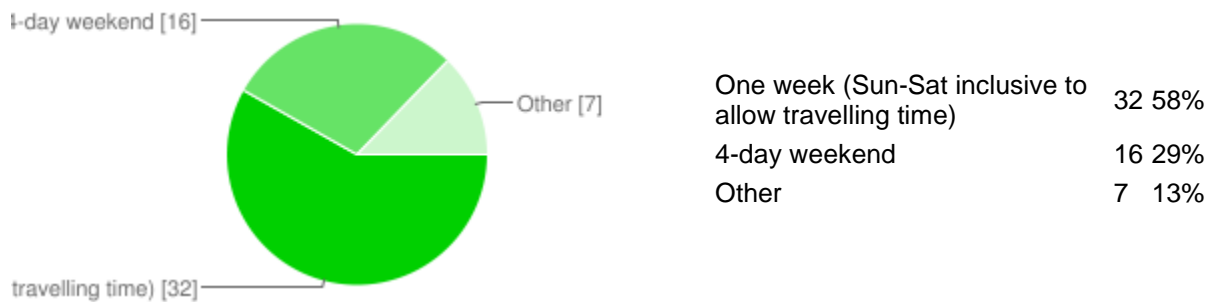
Restricted	20	36%
Intermediate	8	15%
Advanced	8	15%
FI	0	0%
CFI	0	0%
*My rating has lapsed but I would attend if there is provision for a check flight and re-ratification	4	7%

Endorsements

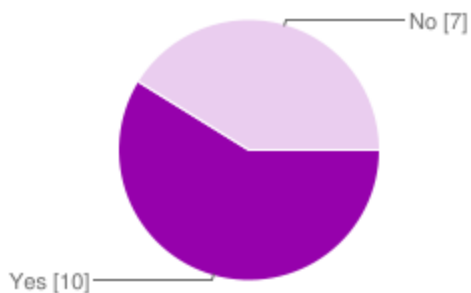
Groundtow	14	82%
Aerotow	5	29%
Tandem	0	0%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Preferred duration



For HGs travelling from interstate, would you find attendance easier if a glider were available for hire there, and transport were arranged via carpooling?



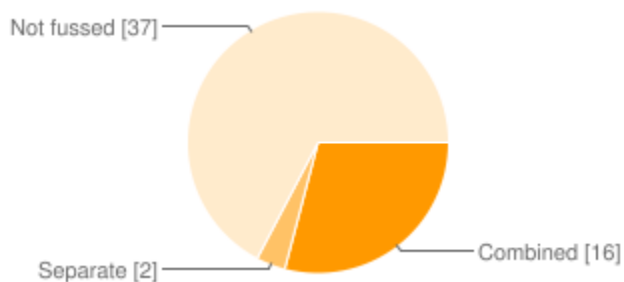
Yes 10 18%
No 7 13%

Preferred Time of Year

Xmas school holidays	5	10%
Dec	9	17%
January	14	27%
Xmas-New Year Break (27th Dec-1st Jan)	8	15%
Immediately before or after a summer comp eg Corryong, Bogong, Forbes	8	15%
Not fussed	23	44%
Other	14	27%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Combined HG& PG or Separate (limited numbers may necessitate a joint fly-in)



Combined 16 29%
Separate 2 4%
Not fussed 37 67%

Preferred location

Coastal	5	9%
Mountain	19	35%
Flatlands	10	18%
Not fussed	29	53%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Preferred launch

footlaunch	45	85%
groundtow	5	9%
areotow	3	6%
not fussed	10	19%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

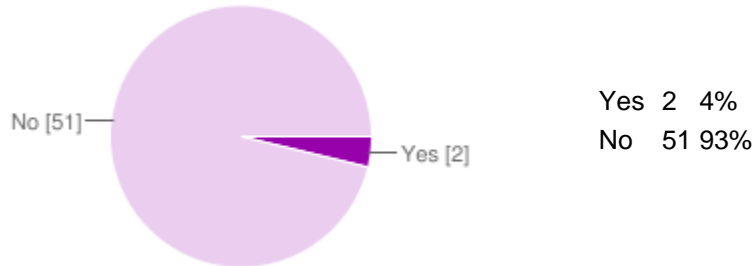
Suggested sites (should have reliable weather, should be accessible, and must include launch opportunities for novice pilots):

Newcastle	12	24%
Tumut	6	12%
Dynamic Flight Park	8	16%
Manilla	31	61%
Sydney	4	8%
Bright	32	63%
Forbes	3	6%

Canungra	17	33%
Melbourne	5	10%
Other	18	35%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Childcare required



I would be interested in the following Tutorials/Workshops

Thermalling	37	70%
XC flying	48	91%
Instruments	37	70%
Weather	42	79%
Competition	17	32%
Dealing with Fear	24	45%
Mentoring others	13	25%
Other	6	11%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

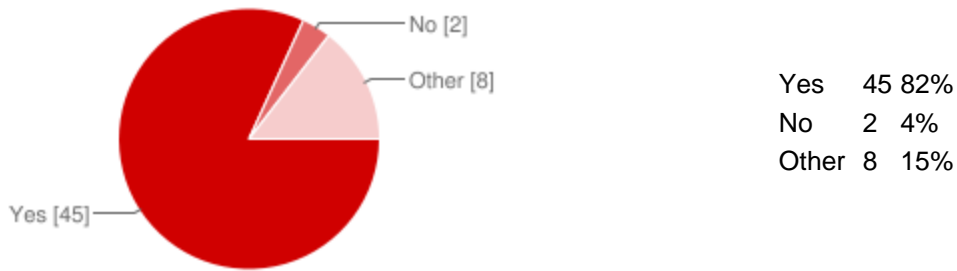
Recommended Instructors/Tutors Mentors (list suggestions)

Tove Heaney Curt Warren Conrad Lotentove heaney if not too busy w family and her study tony armstrong if Stanwell pk oli barthelomious if Bright rohan holtcamp if Ben Nevis ? newcastle Tony Barton psychology - I don't know one you Helen is good for a low airtime pilot or for a peson lacking confidence Heike Haman Antje Daehler Viv Williams Female: Gaynor (Flygirl) (PG-South African pilot, flies a lot here) Male: Brandon O'Donald (PG-Canungra), Gavin Zahner (PG-Canungra), Dave Gibbs (PG-Canungra), Carl Foster (PG-Conondale), Peter Schwenderling (HG-Toowoomba), Tim Hannah (HG-Toowoomba)Godfr...

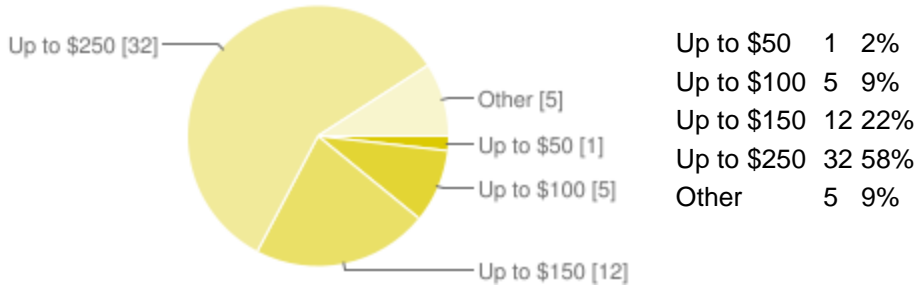
Preferred accomodation

Tents/camping/cabins at Caravan Park	14	25%
Motel	3	5%
Billeted with local pilots	1	2%
Not fussed	13	24%
Don't care about accomodation as long as it is cheap	21	38%
Other	3	5%

Whatever the accommodation, I would like us all to be in the same place rather than scattered



Price: For 1 week, I can pay

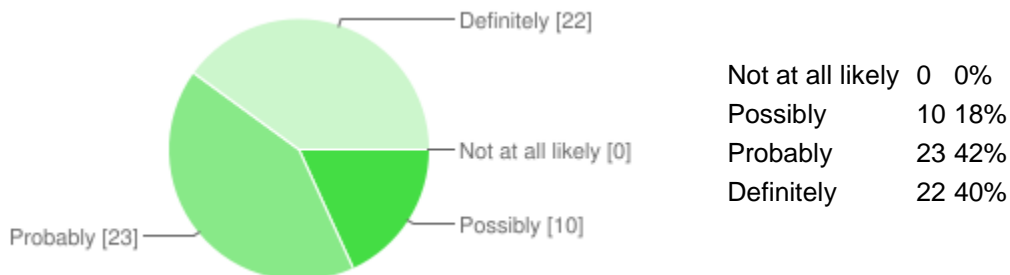


What kinds of organised meals & social activities would you like to see? Please specify:
 Barbecue pre and post briefing of flights movie of some spectacular / good HG if no flying - sport but not team sport, bicycle, hiking Ooohhhh Mexican night! (A nice one) 80's night dress up :) dinners where flying issues can be discussed. meal and talk/forum together post flight discussions Tutorials/Workshops as above One or two organised meals (first & last night) Karaoke. JUST JOKING!! Video evenings Tours of the local area if conditions are not flyable. Organised meals not a necessity One or two optional social events would be good - perhaps a BBQ and sit around a camp fire chatting K...

Can you help your sister pilots with this event in any organisational, mentoring or other capacity (eg goodie bags, sponsorship)? Please specify and if yes ensure you've provided a phone number above:

I can help in organisation yes. I am happy to sponsor something and am open to suggestions. Maybe a T-shirt? My company is *****. I have been involved in organising events over many years, but now have restricted time. Happy to mentor if able to attend. I have a bag of about 100 little mini windsocks (toy things for the car antennae), which you can put in goodie bags. They have "****" and the Gin logo on them. Very happy and keen to coordinate the *** crew. If you choose a relatively close location to **** we can assist ...

If price, location and time of year is right for you, how likely is it that you will attend this fly-in?



Any other suggestions?

-car pooling - add 'not fussed' -joint HG PG - I don't know. Could be a chance to try the other sport if it is the right location -PG women - may have someone who has skills to talk about a topic -may have to divide up for some of the talks if combined HG PG -the same paragraph twice "Price:" -i tried to tick more than one in a few (make a comment box below)not for now, good on you for organising!! Good on yas for doing this. And I think it will be great to mix it up with the PGs and HGs. Kari Roberson loves these sorts of things and always makes sure we have t-shirts appropriately dec...

APPENDIX B: REGISTRATION DETAILS & QUESTIONNAIRE (essential for instructors):

Timestamp

First Name

Surname

HGFA Number

Mobile

Date of Birth

Glider Make, Model and Size

Emergency contact

What are expecting to achieve at WWW2?

What would you say your strengths are when it comes to flying?

What would you say your weaknesses are when it comes to flying?

Tshirt Size

Flying Hours

HG or PG?

Rating

Dietary Requirements

Inland experience

Email

Appendix C: Budget Actuals 2nd April 2011; bank statements available on request; the small surplus will be retained as a seed fund for WWW3

Income				
Income Total	\$ 14,052.90			
Item Description	No. Of	Unit Cost	Item Cost	Running total
CASA *			3600	3600
HGFA *			1500	5100
SAHGA*			187.5	5287.5
NSW*			500	5787.5
Vic*			500	6287.5
ACT*			187.5	6475
Cairns*			200	6675
Canungra*			300	6975
Sunshine			0	6975
WA*			300	7275
REGISTRATIONS *			3865	11140
donation*			1500	12640
Partner Meals*			287.5	12927.5
Misc Cash Payments Tees, late reg etc*			745.4	13672.9
Committee reg helen birgit barb julie*	4	95	380	14052.9
*PAID			0	14052.9
Total Income				14052.9

Expenses				
Expenses Total	\$13,776.17			
Item Description	No. Of	Unit Cost	Item Cost	Running total
Brian Webb fee, bus, meals, fuel			1665.5	1665.5
Tony Barton fee, travel, meals			1815	3480.5
Andrew Horchner fee, meals			1050	4530.5
Kitchen Hire - Outdoor Inn			200	4730.5
Tove Acc - Outdoor inn	4	23	92	4822.5
Tony Acc - Outdoor Inn	6		138	4960.5
Tove Honorarium, travel, meals			385	5345.5
Olli Meals	2	25	50	5395.5
Olli Hon			500	5895.5
Driver 1 Fees - Theresa Date			500	6395.5
Driver 2 Fees - Pete Whitworth			500	6895.5
Driver 3 Fees - Deree Hedley			500	7395.5
Driver 2 Meals - Pete Whitworth	2	25	50	7445.5
Pilotsite fees NEVHGC	42	25	1050	8495.5
Pilot BBQ - Outdoor Inn	66	25	1650	10145.5
Pilot Pres Dinner 67 Carol binder			1973	12118.5
Pilot T shirt - Martinez	55		500	12618.5
Fuel - Pete Whitworth			88.87	12707.37
Logo			275	12982.37
Driver 3 Meals -- Deree Hedley	2	25	50	13032.37
Novelty prizes - Helen McKerral			60	13092.37
Refunds - Committee Reg	4	95	380	13472.37
Driver 1 Meals - reimburse HMCK	3		40	13512.37
Petty Cash purchases, Bright Hmck			23.8	13536.17
Postage & Petty Purch - Birgit			70	13606.17
Trophies - Helen McKerral			170	13776.17
Total Expense				13776.17

APPENDIX D: WWW2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WWW3 (based on instructor, mentor, organising committee and participant feedback)

1. PRE-EVENT PLANNING

1.1. Pre-event questionnaires detailing pilot experience (hours, no. hours inland), rating, aims and expectations for the week were invaluable – indeed essential – for instructors and should be continued. Add to questionnaire a question to determine number of pilots who wish to upgrade their rating (Int or Adv theory).

1.2. Ensuring all attendees were current HGFA members (via their HGFA number) before the event greatly streamlined registration; ensure that those wanting checkflights or whom are renewing send confirmation details to organisers ahead of time.

1.3. *Lock in* precise per head costs of meals *and menus* before setting the registration fee.

1.4. Actively promote the availability of checkflights for pilots returning to the sport.

1.5. Begin planning 8-12 months ahead of time

2. PRACTICAL MATTERS:

2.1. Instructors noticed that experienced women pilots they knew, who were (unusually) flying **without** their partners, developed enormously in confidence over the week in appreciating their own skill set, and that leadership roles emerged more readily amongst these women when males were absent. There was also a unique ‘vibe’ on the hill when women pilots far outnumbered the men. Male partners who attended were respectful of the event’s aims and kept to the background, and many were extremely helpful in videoing participants, retrieve driving etc. However, we recommend that male partners continue to be gently discouraged, albeit not banned, from attending, that they should be absent from most of the workshops (or at least not contribute to discussions), and that information for partners be made clear on the website, in publicity and in the pilot handbook.

2.2. As instructors are responsible for mentoring the least experienced Restricted rated pilots, it’s important that other participants be advised at the initial briefing and/or in the handbook to let the instructors fulfil their role as the main informers on launch (especially immediately before launch when new pilots can become overwhelmed by too much information from too many people). Restricted rated pilots who feel they need extra support should be advised at the initial briefing to approach the designated mentors and instructors rather than other pilots for advice on launch. Discussion amongst participants after flights is constructive and not an issue.

2.3. Choosing the right instructors is essential to the success of the event. They must be able to facilitate growth and confidence in participants’ independent decision making without “taking over”. Brian Webb, Andrew Horchner, Olli Barthelmes, Tony Barton and Tove Heaney were all excellent and all have said that they would be happy to repeat their roles at WWW3.

2.4. With such a large number of PG pilots requiring mentoring on launch, helmet stickers with pilot’s names would make the PG instructors’ work on launch MUCH easier. Such stickers are recommended for WWW3.

2.5. Advanced pilots gained less from WWW2 than did restr & Int pilots, mainly due to unseasonably stable weather conditions. We recommend the inclusion of an additional highly skilled paid (by honorarium) PG mentor whose role it is to suggest tasks and to be in the air flying with others, marking thermals, leading the way etc, rather than staying on launch or in the LZ. Olli Barthelmes did this with great effectiveness for the Adv HG pilots. Ideally this mentor would be a top female PG pilot (eg Antje, Viv, Heike) but, if they are unavailable, it could also be a highly skilled male pilot with the right approach and attitude.

2.6. We asked pilots and partners to bring video cameras to record launches and landings and this proved a massive and effective learning opportunity for the non-flyable day; it could also be scheduled as an evening session (perhaps as a pizza “movie” night on Thursday?) We strongly recommend that the filming and an analysis session be repeated and specifically scheduled at WWW3.

3. LOCATION: Pre-event polling amongst potential participants showed Manilla and Bright as equal favourites and a long way ahead of the third option. Bright was chosen because instructor & retrieve costs were significantly (very significantly) cheaper, and because we were advised by hang gliding instructors that Bright & the Kiewa Valley (launches & LZs) were more suited to low airtime hang glider pilots than Manilla. For these reasons, we recommend Bright as the location for WWW3. The Outdoor Inn was an ideal venue and we recommend that, whatever location is chosen, that all participants be in the one place to maximise community, support and learning opportunities. The Outdoor Inn also provided excellent facilities for workshops.

4. TIMING: We recommend that if WWW3 is held in Bright, that it be in early March, past the strongest thermic weather, and before conditions shut down in winter. If the event is held elsewhere, then conditions should be before or after, not during, peak thermic conditions.

5. FREQUENCY: The committee recommends that WWW be run as a biennial rather than annual event to make it easier to secure funding & to prevent committee burnout. Feedback suggests participants prefer a biennial event especially if it alternates with a lower-key fly-in.

6. FEES & PAYMENTS:

Keeping registration fees as low as possible did encourage attendance. Funding from CASA, state associations, HGFA & Clubs was essential for an event where 3 instructors are employed. Mentors & drivers were paid honoraria of \$500 for the 5 days (whether we flew or not). Instructors were paid little more than twice that. Because of these embarrassingly low rates of remuneration, the committee covered all travel, accommodation and evening meal expenses for instructors, mentors and drivers and we strongly recommend that this be done again to encourage mentors to attend, and to acknowledge the generosity of instructors so they are not out of pocket!

Registration fees covered 2 meals, site fees and a T-shirt with a small surplus of about \$5/head. However, this surplus was really too small; we were lucky in that a participant contributed towards the cost of T-shirts; a larger surplus of \$15-\$20/head would still provide great value for money and create a buffer for unexpected expenses.

7. THE PROGRAMME

7.1. If held in Bright, a 45 minute briefing in the LZ for low airtime pilots who may need guidance on approach etc, should be scheduled immediately after the initial welcome & briefing at HQ.

7.2. We recommend a round-the-table where participants each have a minute or two to introduce themselves to everyone be scheduled in conjunction with the Welcoming BBQ on Monday night.

7.3. We had 3 joint meals: the welcome BBQ (Monday), and Presentation Dinner (Friday), both included in the registration fee, plus an optional Wed Pizza night paid for at registration on Sunday night. However we recommend that joint meals also be scheduled for Tuesday & Thursday to maximise networking, community and learning. These meals should be held at HQ but should consider pilots who cannot afford 5 catered meals and who prefer to cook for themselves – perhaps an optional Chinese takeaway, or a shared cook-up.

7.4. We recommend that evening debriefs be rescheduled to around 7.30-8pm, immediately after (or at) meals and followed by additional evening sessions (see below). This was because flying often continued late into the day for pilots who wished to take advantage of smooth morning and evening conditions.

7.5. WE recommend that Int & Adv theory workshops be scheduled into the programme over two consecutive evening sessions for those who wish to upgrade their ratings. These sessions could run concurrently with other workshops.

7.6. WE recommend that social evening sessions be scheduled, such as a Tall Tales Session (There I was, thought I was going to Die!), One Best Tip session (where everyone contributes their one best flying tip), an informal Q&A with an Instructor/Mentor Panel.

7.7. WE recommend that, if the event is held in Bright, that Craig Collings be asked to present several workshops.

7.8. Flexibility was crucial to the success of the event. Flying always came first and we recommend that the WWW3 programme and organisers remain flexible with scheduling to take advantage of weather, flying conditions and other opportunities (eg last minute guest speakers).

7.9. We recommend that the 8am start be maintained throughout the week. We rescheduled to 9am when flying conditions were forecast to be poor, but this proved confusing.

7.10. We recommend that porosity checks (for a small fee) be incorporated into the programme; several pilots were flying obsolete and dangerous equipment. For HG pilots, a glider tuning session is useful.

7.11. Because pilots flew almost all day every day but one, a couple of workshops fell off the programme. However the most important ones should be scheduled for the (guaranteed) 8am session. The omission of the instruments workshop was mourned by several participants. Several suggested practice using GPS and we had in fact pre-prepared a walking treasure-hunt task around the Outdoor Inn using GPS with turn points (good for a windy day) for groups of 3-4. We recommend such a task be scheduled for WWW3, perhaps as a night walk.

8. COMMUNICATION: When sessions were rescheduled, this caused confusion. We recommend a dedicated noticeboard at HQ right from the first day. We also strongly recommend that the budget include funds (about \$30 at time of writing) for an SMS service as suggested by Brian Webb, which allows organisers and instructors to communicate changes in plans immediately to every participant wherever they are.

9. EQUIPMENT DEMONSTRATIONS/DEALER INVOLVEMENT: Several participants requested an opportunity to try equipment, and asked that dealers/manufacturers be invited to display/sell their wares at the event. The opportunity for pilots flying old equipment to view or even test fly new designs was considered positive, but it was also felt that there was the potential for this to detract from the special nature of the event. If the next committee wish to include dealer displays/sales etc, we strongly recommend that this be scheduled with great care and control, with guidelines established well before the event. May be held before or after the event on the weekend as demo will take up a lot of time.

APPENDIX E – PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

WHAT DID WWW2 DO WELL?

I want to say thank you to our amazing organisers, generous sponsors, outstanding instructors, inspiring mentors and all of you who participated for making this event a huge success. I'm sure we all got something out of it... whether it is a PB, new skills, increased confidence, lots of fun or new friends. During my long drive back to Queensland, I had plenty to think about. During the week, I've grown as a pilot, experiencing amazing highs and challenging lows. Not only [have I] increased my skills, confidence and airtime; but I came away with an increased respect for the risks involved in the sport and the importance of building a strong foundation slowly and safely. We had the perfect environment to do that at WWW2 and I'm grateful for it. Finally, I had heaps of fun, met some cool people and came back home loving that sport even more. (Int)

I feel so blessed by the whole experience. Best week of my life! (Restr)

I can't begin to express the growth I'm experiencing on so many levels following my week at WWW2. I've truly discovered my passion for pg'ing. Thank you for such an awesome, fun and valuable event. (Int).

It was so affordable for the quality of instruction, the retrieves and mentoring. Everyone was so 'together' and focused. There was a good balance of fun and safety. Well done to the organisers!!! You deserve the best prize for bringing all those wonderful women together and sending them home as fully fledged pilots. The sky is now our limit! I love you all sincerely for giving me the opportunity to discover my comfort zone and then expand on it. Words are not enough to convey the mental, emotional and spiritual growth I experienced! (Restr).

This week has inspired and excited me again with my flying. I realise that I LOVE flying and had put in on the backburner for too long. I also feel honoured to have been in the company of such an amazing, passionate and strong group of women. (Adv).

The organisation of the week ensured all participants had plenty to do. All of the sessions with the professional people like Craig Collings, Peter B and instructors, information from CASA in the goodie bag was invaluable. (Restr).

Had an awesome time, flew 5 days and learned some invaluable stuff from our hangie mentors!

I liked everything – it was very well organised and had a good mix of events – good talks, accessibility to instructors, flying and help on launch etc. (Restr).

Organisation was amazing, from the website to the event, the different talks eg Dealing with Fear, Craig's talk, thermalling, and to have the practical part at the same time.

My aim this week was to gain more confidence in launching and landing. It was a perfect event to do this because we didn't have such great Xc conditions [so] I got to do a lot of sleddies in light wind or nil wind conditions. Really really great training conditions and I feel my confidence has skyrocketed on both areas!! (Adv)

Women with Wings 2 has convinced me to renew my HGFA membership – I was about to give up flying. All talks were great. (Int).

The organisation was amazing – the drivers, talks and dinners – we really felt we were looked after. I learned a lot about safety in launching and about different launch conditions. (Int)

The main focus was to get us in the air! Reviewing the footage of our launches and landings was absolutely invaluable. (Int)

This event caused me to recertify with the HGFA. I had not flown in approximately 3 years due to becoming a mum, and I am now so enthused to continue in the sport I love. (Int)

The instructors were phenomenal! The thermal talk was the highlight session. The dinner events were beautiful. The parachute repack was extremely informative (Restr).

Olli and Tony were fantastic! Brilliant organisation, safety, and a general feeling of being nurtured and looked after in every aspect of flying. Excellent safety briefing before each flight and instruction on takeoff and landing conditions. I always felt safe and fully informed about the flight and takeoff/landing.... SO so good for my flying! (Int).

The program was flexible to all weather conditions. The level of organisation was fantastic – everything seemed to be anticipated and prepared for. (Int).

It was super organised, the good vibrations spread and motivated and inspired the whole group. Every girl did a lot of progress. (Adv).

Amazing support, very open and accepting environment to allow every participant to find out what is holding them back and [to] address the issues.

The accommodation was... perfect for the event. It really helped foster the awesome sense of community... Just being able to fly with such a diverse group of women has been a privilege and a pleasure. (Restr)

The whole organisation of the event was fantastic. I loved everything about WWW2. May I say I wouldn't have been flying again if it wasn't for this event! (Int).

... Making the event affordable and achievable for many was important and, I believe, delivered. Dedicated retrieve drivers [were] a huge bonus. Safety was reinforced and taught well by Brian. (Restr).

It was fantastic to get flying again after a break in such a supportive environment and with exactly the right amount of help. And so many inspiring women! Amazing instructors! I learned so much! And had a ball! (Restr).

[I liked the] skilled, personable trainers, positive/encouraging and supportive environment. (Restr).

[I liked the] flexibility. (Adv).

The organisation was excellent! All the instructors were very well suited to the task and supported the clinic. Really the event couldn't have been better! (Restr).

[I liked the] pre-event info, organisation, culture, instructors, ambience. (Restr).

Fabulous, fabulous, fabulous! Every year please! (Int)

Absolutely everything was done excellently. Outdoor Inn was great – Terry and Bernie were great. THnks to Chappo for repacking my reserve on the Monday before flying. The knowledge I gained through talking to advanced pilots was invaluable. (Restr).

Very organised. Focused on flying and safety. So many mentors to learn from. Supportive environment. Knew about goals, what's ahead, good workshops, so well organised!

Being flexible with the formal sessions [maximised] our flying time. (Int).

This event was very well organised and the overall goal of developing skill levels and confidence levels was achieved, even more than I expected. [I was] impressed with training provided in this event. (HG Instructor).

I felt empowered to make my own decisions and more confident in the air as a result of the clinic. It made me believe I could achieve much more than I thought and that I was in control of how I handled myself and my flying. Having met other female pilots in my local region has encouraged me to stay in the sport. (Restr).

The objectives were achieved in abundance. I saw so many pilots improve out of sight in their launching abilities and general confidence. (Int).

The atmosphere has been awesome, just everyone's attitude and positivity is incredibly confidence building. Brian and Andrew [provided] amazing support and guidance.

Fantastic instructors [who] were committed to us all week. The talks were targeted at us and were great. Brian rocked! (Restr).

[I liked the] organisation – particularly drivers and launch support. Guest speakers – reserve repack, psych, thermalling. Having instructors available at all times.

Really organised event. Was great to meet fellow pilots in such a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. Having a central base/accommodation worked well. The committee have been great. Brian and Andrew have been so helpful, supportive and informative. (Adv).

WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER?

'Women's Business' session was too short and did not cover issues as described in programme (Int)

In PG, to have more challenge for the Adv pilots because they turned into mentors, which is not a bad thing, but I think they did not get as much out of it as the REstr rated pilots. (Int).

More talks/clinics for the more advanced pilots. An opportunity to test equipment eg for safety as well as new gear available (Adv).

Because only some pilots were Adv, the Adv pilots should have next time a guide to follow, would be great. (Adv).

Maybe more separation between the beginners and more experienced pilots for clinics (Restr).

More notes to support presentations delivered would have been good. Clearer mechanisms for communicating with pilots as needed eg changed times for briefings presentations etc. I also think that having more planned tasks for more advanced pilots would have been appreciated by them. (Restr).

It was a shame there were not more female instructors – however that is just how it is! The instructors were great! (Int).

To gain more support from senior female pilots (by [them attending]). More senior pilots to attend. For those senior pilots that do attend that there is a workshop for them so they get more out of it. (Restr).

Pray to the weather gods! If the weather had been better it would have been great to have Brian/Andrew guide us through the area. (Adv).

Missed out the rainy day! Maybe more guiding in the air (Restr).

Better weather! More instructors for participants.

We all managed to get to know each other anyway but it would have been nice to have some kind of intro, getting to know each other type of thing. I know some of the PG pilot goals were mentoring related. It would have been great to know that from the beginning. Maybe there could be facilitation of some kind of goal-directed groups. (Restr).

Maybe a couple of things where we do names and intros. And it would be good to have some event where you meet all the women from your area. Address and phone & email list for everyone (unless many don't want it of course). Last thing, it would be great to have more of the women experts talking or giving the workshops – eg the psychiatrist, I was a bit surprised it was a man. (Restr.)

An introduction to everyone and an attempt to put names to faces. I know you supplied name tags but they could have been easier to attach. Perhaps a chat about who's who and why we are here. (Int).

More theory in evenings maybe.

A rules of the air info session might have been useful. Some ground handling sessions would have been good (Restr).

Maybe better chairs but that is the only thing! (Restr).

Nothing! I loved it all! (Restr).

Not much! (Restr).

Nothing! (Restr).

Nothing! (Int).

I actually don't think you could have done better. It was awesome. (Restr).

How can we order better weather?

A big dance party with doof doof music would have been awesome! (Int).

SUGGESTIONS FOR WWW3

Invite dealers to bring gear to try and local schools to provide porosity tests (at a cost of course) and line length tests. Some advanced clinics with Craig Collings (Adv).

Of course it's weather dependent but it would be great to have a XC with instructors. Also to do Int rating but I think that is really hard to incorporate. I guess if the weather was worse we could have done the theory, but I'd rather fly! (Rest).

To go for XC flights with an instructor, but it did not happen due to weather conditions. (int)

It would have been great to have more top end female mentors to fly and receive advice from in the air. But I totally realise that circumstances don't always allow for this. (Int).

Paragliding distributors should take the advantage to represent their products so girls could test fly, test their products as well (Adv).

More talks like Craig's thermal talk eg how to get into and stay in a thermal ie thermalling technique (Restr).

Have cars loaded and travel plans organised before the day. ie who goes with whom, how many gliders go up, how many people we have. But so minor, it took only a little while to get organised and get there to fly.

It would be good if we could have a FB group. This will make photosharing easier, also we can pick up fans and stay in touch with each other. (Restr).

I would like a FB group or to turn the blog into an open site (open to WWW2 women) to post stuff re where they are flying etc. (Restr).

Maybe more ground-based practical activities to balance the theory eg how to centre a thermal (using blindfold and rings on the ground), or how to follow a course using a GPS, with a course that can be followed by car.

A workshop on instruments. (Restr).

The same would do just fine. A fly-in would be great. (Int).

Simple fly-in annually, big event every few years (Adv).

Keep it going, the idea of a fly-in would be great in between events (Restr).

Have it as an annual event, different speakers each year.

Every year or two (Restr).

Definitely yearly or every 2 years. (Restr).

Hold in Manilla so I don't have to travel so far! (Int).

PARTICIPANT STORIES:

WWW2 - PG View

Written by Claire Geister

To introduce myself briefly, I earned my PG licence in September 09 and in the 18 months to follow had acquired 23 hours, almost all coastal flying. Other commitments coupled with our temperamental weather patterns mean my flights are quite irregular. This lack of consistency made me a very nervous pilot, to the point that I could waste a good half an hour on launch making excuses as to why I shouldn't fly, spoiling not only my own flying opportunities but my partner's too. It became a much more stressful task than a fun one. The frustrating part was, I really wasn't even sure which aspect of the sport I was nervous about. I know, I was about to lob myself off the side of a mountain or cliff, but I understood how the wing would keep me up there. In hindsight my worries were mostly irrational.

Then came the opportunity to be involved in something that sounded awesome; *"A fun, inspiring skills clinic for Aussie women hang glider and paraglider pilots of all experience levels"* - Women With Wings 2!

I was so excited I registered as an early bird. I hoped such an event could help reveal strategies to deal with my nerves, build my confidence and allow me to begin to understand our chosen sports from a mental view, not just a practical one. It sounded very promising with excellent mentors, guest speakers and several interesting lectures and hands-on sessions to attend.

I arrived the day prior to WWW2 commencing and it was flyable on Mystic Hill. Arriving on launch I was faced with more than 40 pilots, many of whom were participating in the Mystic Cup that weekend. The butterflies and negative thoughts quickly brewed. I eventually managed a sleddy, was glad to be safely back in the LZ (close to it anyway - next paddock over) and left wondering how the rest of the week would unfold.

Apparently I worry too much! On the first morning of the event I was immediately put at ease as I met all the amazing ladies and soaked up their positive attitudes. I logged 11 launches and landings, all from Mystic Hill, for the week and while my flights won't appear on any XC websites, they were exactly what I needed. As the week progressed I finally felt comfortable to assess and refine my technique. Perfecting forward launches which are not something I do often, and working to induce the smoothest flare. I did have a PB highlight of a 30 minute thermal flight, finishing in the LZ.

WWW2 has been the most amazing week (I wish it was two). I learnt why my mind responds the way it does, and better ways to manage it. One of the key secrets is just to breathe deeply - the last thing I'd consciously been thinking of at launch time! Also I flew more regularly in that week than I had since obtaining my licence, which definitely helped. I've had two excellent coastal flights since then and my confidence has allowed me to finally fly as a pilot, as opposed to feeling like a passenger. I have grown immensely as both a pilot and a person thanks to my experiences through the week. I've discovered how much I love flying.

Can't wait for WWW3!

Women with wings 2.
By Diana Sima

As the clinic date approached I was both excited and fearful. The tone of the emails going to and fro, and on the blog, was certainly encouraging. I felt very welcome. Nevertheless, I also imagined that I would be very much out of my depth as I was such a new pilot and had not flown for 10 months. I heard that champions and very experienced world class competitors would be attending and I would be a fraud to keep such company.

Happily, Helen's opening address on Monday proved my fears groundless;

"...your goal may be to have as many sleddies as possible over the week to improve your launches or your landings.....", .Oh! Really? Is that OK then?

It was certainly OK. The instructors were supportive, encouraging and kind and this enabled me to relax. The other pilots - with their range of skills and confidence - mentored, commiserated, and celebrated with me. My stomach still wobbled a bit nearing the top of the hill but I was in lovely company.

By the end of that fantastic week, I had learnt that the way I fly - seldom, tentative and inexperienced - was not only OK for me but was as legitimate as any; to set my own goals, however modest. My

career as a pilot had not actually been in danger but it was certainly not flourishing. Now my confidence level - not only in my ability but in the knowledge that I will keep flying - is rock solid. And I know I won't lose it.

THE DAY MY DREAM CAME TRUE.
BY GIA ARBUTHNOTT

I arrived in the beautiful hamlet of Bright in North Victoria as a restricted paragliding pilot who loved the idea of flying but hadn't realised how overpowering fear could be. I spent the first few days doing as many sleddies on Mount Mystic as I could, getting used to 'inland' air and enjoying the sensation of 'falling' out of the sky and landing safely. Lots of launches and landings, and steadily my confidence grew. Talking and discussing my feelings of fear with other women really helped. These were valid feelings but they could be dealt with. Being feminine was not an impediment to flying! Female pilots are a rare breed and I was so lucky to be spending a week flying with a flock of them. I was surrounded by inspiring women who were pushing through their issues and achieving goals and who understood my unreasonable desire to defy gravity! Brian Webb and Andrew Horchner were always encouraging and supportive. The whole event was so well organised with great attention given to creating a feeling of support and safety. My doubts and fears had been keeping me safe... too safe! I was ready to leave my comfort zone. The scene was set for me to give birth to my inner cross country pilot.

We had been so lucky with the weather and the window was open on my last day in Bright for one more fly. I focused and launched and headed for the resident thermal. "Marcus here I come!" I felt like Alice in Wonderland. I had the keys to controlling my perceptions and therefore my fears. Things were falling into place in the air. Marcus was feeling big and fat and lazy and as I gently circled I went up and up and up! I was 300 mt above launch and loving it! I sailed around the bowl without considering landing in the designated landing zone. The sky was my limit! I could go anywhere I wanted! I made a call on the radio for any other pilots considering a flight to the Wandi Pub and Christa came boating out of the blue and said "I'll take you!". So off we flew, over the back of launch and into the unknown. We flew over the hedge maze (the only way to truly appreciate it!) and over cottages surrounded by autumn trees. The world below was surreal. It was like a fairytale. I was living my dream! Oh what a feeling! Yes all those cliches that still don't convey the awesomeness of it.

Christa was leading the way to the landing paddock and I didn't need to worry about getting lost and not knowing where I was going. We sailed gently through the warm afternoon air and set up for a nil-wind landing in the paddock with the bull. I was so exhilarated when I landed. I gave Christa a big hug. She was like the midwife who helped me give birth to my inner pilot. I love my inner pilot. I trust her to make good decisions and take me on adventures and keep me safe. I have found a sport I love that is worth the fear and frustration because of the joy and exhilaration you get from it. I have booked a cross-country clinic with Brian Webb so that I can grow and strengthen my cross country flying skills which I am really looking forward to.

NB: Gia received the WWW2 Eagle Award for the best PB.

WWW2 BY GABRIELLE DAVIDSON

So often in life we avoid what challenges us. We'd rather be secure than thrilled, comfortable than exhilarated. In flying, like life, it's not what we're scared of that limits us, it's how we deal with that fear.

I'm new to flying and it sends a wash of emotion through me that's tumultuous and hard to qualify. The night before Women With Wings II, I could barely sleep. The excitement had been building for weeks, but as the day grew closer a healthy dose of nerves also pushed in.

I was a complete novice and hadn't even had my hands on any gear since I learnt in December. I finally took the plunge – and a wing! – a few weeks before the clinic. I only got to lay it out once and it was overwhelming.

Thanks to the amazing work of the organising committee, we'd had an active forum and I wasn't the only one who was excited about WWW, but I felt alone in being nervous.

Everyone was going to be more experienced than me, and I was doubting my memory on the most basic points (a risers in the right hand?). On top of this there was the long drive to a strange place and a group of people I'd never met.

Flying must often be like this, if you aren't already part of the communities that build up, and as a natural introvert it's an extra aspect for me to stress about. Any large group of people can be intimidating... but fearing you're going to look like an idiot in front of that group makes it even more so.

However, one of the strongest lessons I will take from WWW is the importance of that flying community. As Christa Texler, one of our more experienced pilots and winner of a Big Sister award, commented: "Still amazed at how many PG Fly Grrls were lurking in the wood work - thought I was one of only a few!"

The first morning was a blur. Everywhere were competent-looking women eating healthy breakfasts. I didn't plan to fly that day. I didn't feel familiar enough with any aspects of my gear, and wanted to go ground handling. Conditions weren't shaping up well, though, and it looked like Monday morning was all that was going to be flyable. There was no time for nerves, mine or anyone else's. Up the hill we went.

There were a lot of firsts for me that day, not the least of which would have been my first flight as a licensed pilot. I had a clue what I was doing, but I didn't have the confidence or preparation to follow through. I buckled in and tentatively asked for help. The other women were there for me but it was Brian and Andrew, our on-site instructors, who got me through.

It was running reverse launches and I started off fine. Swing it up from your hips, get it straight, turn, run. My wing came up beautifully and I legged it to the end of the astroturf and stopped ready to fly. Oops. I was dragged forwards and couldn't get my feet going again. I face planted it and bounced down the hill and through the first few bushes. It looked grim and I wasn't the only one relieved when I flew out the bottom. Brian came on the radio: "Ok, that's ok, you did good." Ha!

It was a straight sleddy and I barely remember the actual flight. Just confusion as to which ridge I was over, and which paddock was the landing one. I went one curve too far on my setup and came in oscillating and kicking trees. Trying to correct it only made it worse. Again, it looked bad, but Andrew came through while I was still high and reaching the middle of a pendulum. Flare, he said, and I did as I was told. I came down hard, but safe.

In a way, these screw-ups were a relief. The worst certainly hadn't happened, but I'd made some of the basic mistakes I'd been scared I would, and I looked like the utter novice I was. But I was lucky, the mistakes could have been dangerous without instructors there to support me, and I did enough stuff right to get me through. I was ok, and back in the air.

The most valuable skills we gain are never a smooth road and know I wasn't the only one who learnt so much that week. As we came to know each other and our gear and to trust ourselves, our instructors and our fellow flyers, we all improved.

For many, conditions on launch were a challenge. Bright was nestled below us hugged by ridges all around, and more than thirty people and a video camera watched in expectation, but the breeze was barely there.

It was front starts almost all the way, a novelty for both inland and coastal pilots, and I wasn't the only one needing more than one go to get off the hill. By the end of the week we'd all progressed and difference was so obvious even the hangies noticed.

The videos helped when we got round to laughing and groaning through them, and the gently expert instruction and guidance of Brian Webb and supportive atmosphere made all the difference. We had so much to learn from and teach each other!

By Friday the group on the hill was a familiar and rewarding place to be, and the more experienced pilots' value as mentors had come to the fore, as they led first time thermallers cross country.

We dobed each other in for our intrepid, scary and skilful moments, and the list of personal bests spanned three sheets of butchers paper in the austere splendour of the historic hall that is Camp Krusty's rec room.

As well as numerous sleddies many people had their first thermalling flights, first flights in a gaggle, and first time above launch. First perfect touchdown, first cross country, first forward launch.

Many pilots were experienced coastal flyers. Their landings and take offs were fine, but front starts and thermals threw them. Seeing the trepidation of so many competent flyers, my inexperience stopped seeming such a hindrance and enthusiasm took over. If I could get up, then that was where I was going!

Conditions for the week shaped up better than anyone could have expected. In the end we only had one non flying day, when we caught up on some of the planned theory and workshops, and gained many more valuable insights into flying and how and why we do it.

I learnt so much on the hill, in the paddock and at camp in Bright I barely know where to start describing it, let alone fit it into the logbook. And that's leaving out everything that happened in the actual air. But it's the value of community I'll take away with me as much as anything.

I've realised what a joy flying really is to me, and learnt to safely push the boundaries of my skills and knowledge, something that would have been impossible for someone like me in a less supportive environment.

I've discovered the adrenalin of hitting turbulence and knowing the thermal is coming. Of turning my eyes upwards to watch my wing, anticipating its movements and ready to control them, being ready to chase it. Of finding it, and feeling the lift.

I stayed the weekend after the clinic had ended and realised how much I'd improved. The extra space on the hill gave me time to watch the world and feel the wind and wait around for conditions that would maximise my chances of staying in the air. I managed to reach cloudbase (and flew away very quickly, it wasn't the day for it). I found the thermal and watched a sky of pilots track to where I'd been. I felt the gravity suck that is the beginning of a spiral.

I also had my first outlanding, and managed to deal with it calmly and safely, I'd played about on the hill too long and got into a situation I shouldn't have. I'd like to think I wouldn't have, except that there was a nice dirt road there, and the pines weren't that big after all.

The crowning point of the week for me was the Friday evening. I'd gone from such tenuous beginnings to such committed enjoyment. I'd learnt so much in the company of such amazing people. I won the trophy for most improved paraglider pilot and the crowd went wild, a delirious confirmation of how much I'd grown as a flyer and a person.

Too often we don't put ourselves in situations we are unfamiliar with. They can be scary, but it's the only way we get to think and act big. Having experienced such an intensive and well organised flying skills clinic, I never want to come down. I know there are many more challenges awaiting me, more scares to get through, more joys to experience. Bring it on, I say, I can hardly wait.

Note: Gabrielle won the Peregrine Award for Most improved PG pilot.

Women with Wings 2 – A Hangie Perspective
By Kathryn O'Riordan

I didn't quite know what to expect from Women With Wings 2. As part of the organising committee, and a hang glider pilot with about 150 hours, I wondered how much this week would benefit me, the other hangies and the paraglider pilots.

Our motley crew of hangies included a new coastal pilot with no inland hours to ladies with hundreds of hours and reams of experience (and had the stories to boot!)

Our mentors Tony Barton, Tove Heaney and Olli Barthelmes were full of enthusiasm and ready to teach us a few things ☺

Everything was organised – all we had to think about was flying our heads off.

From the very first briefing I knew this was going to be a well-oiled event. Brian had everything under control with the paragliders and Olli and Tony were ready to take us eager hangies to Towonga Gap.

WOW! What a place. The launch is perched over the beautiful Kiewa Valley. You could see Mt. Bogong and Mt Emu off in the distance, inviting us to come fly their slopes.

It seemed everyone had their own agendas. Some wanted to go XC, and some wanted to fly around and land at the Mt Beauty airstrip. That was the great thing about this event. It was well organised but we also had the freedom to do whatever we wanted with regards our flying – with everyone at different skill levels, this approach worked perfectly.

We had some nice social flying that day with everyone thermalling together at the beginning. When Olli went deep and low into the ridge I shot off towards the foothills with Tove and Birgit. It was so much fun flying with these experienced women. Although I imagine Tove was not so happy with her glide ratio on the Fun 190 ☺!

It was so great meeting and flying with Tove. She is one of my inspirations in the sport. She flew that day for the first time in 3 years and it looks like she is chomping at the bit to get back on her high performance wing now she has the bug again :) It'll be fantastic to have her in the hang gliding scene with her bubbly persona and determined attitude.

All in all a good day for most. However one of our novice pilots broke her arm after an awkward landing. Such a shame after her great first inland flight.

Driving back into Bright, with its large tree-lined streets and that odd but intoxicating smell of bush fires, I felt a strong sense of wellbeing. This sport brings us to the most beautiful places in the world and for that I feel extremely lucky.

Days 2 & 3 were 'working' days - spent practising light wind launches and landings up at Mystic, a beautiful gentle sloping launch overlooking the town of Bright.

Hey if this was 'work', then I'll swap jobs any day! Feeling the silky air on my face, looking at the beautiful scenery on the way down from Mystic...I had rediscovered the joy of sleddies!

We videoed everything and looking at all the footage of both hangies and paras on Thursday. It was encouraging to see that everyone had improved so much since day 1. Olli spent some time tuning my LiteSport, so I took the opportunity to fly some different gliders which was interesting. Besides flying we have had some great talks on fear and stress when flying, glider mechanics and thermalling.

The imposing Mt Buffalo was on the cards for the last day. The sky looked beautiful and the launch conditions almost perfect. How lucky were we?? We set up quickly and watched Olli as he thermalled, swooped and dived in front of launch, getting everyone excited. We all got off launch with the help of Tony and bonus, we even got some decent airtime thermalling above Buffalo.

Wandering through the wispy clouds, wind in our faces, smelling the Autumn air and, gazing at the strikingly magnificent mountains below, I am sure we all felt a sense of how perfect it was to be able to experience beautiful Victoria in a way most people could never fathom.

I didn't want to leave Women With Wings. I was the only one either – we were just getting started!
