

Media Release

17th October 2008

Kyeema air disaster 70th anniversary commemoration

The fatal airline accident that gave birth to Australia's air traffic control system is to be commemorated at the Mt Dandenong crash site memorial at noon on Saturday October 25th.

Occurring when airline travel was first gaining public acceptance, it was Australia's worst air disaster to that time and one of the worst in the world. All eighteen on board died instantly, the majority of them leading citizens. They included Mr. Charles Hawker MHR, an outstanding South Australian politician and possible future prime minister, after whom an electorate in that State was named.

The tragedy remains today the most significant Australian air accident for its effect on air safety, becoming the catalyst for a major overhaul of aviation administration and regulation. It resulted in the installation of radio navigation aids on major air routes and the establishment of the Department of Civil Aviation as a new Federal portfolio.

Never before or since has an Australian air disaster had as much effect on the introduction of safety measures. Largely because of the *Kyeema* disaster, Australian skies today are amongst the safest in the world.

The accident occurred early in the afternoon of October 25th 1938 when the Douglas DC-2 *Kyeema*, en route from Adelaide to Melbourne, overshot Essendon Airport in cloud and descended into the western face of fog-enshrouded Mt Dandenong.

The 70th anniversary commemoration, organised by the Mount Dandenong Historical Society and the Australian Air League is a public event with ceremonies by Air League cadets and the Victoria Police pipe band in attendance.

Official guests are to include Federal, State and local government members and industry representatives. Relatives of the victims attending from interstate include Sir James Hardy OBE, the Hon. David Hawker MP and Mr Colin Gramp.

A new book, *Disaster in the Dandenongs - the Kyeema airliner tragedy* by Macarthur Job OAM, a former pilot and air safety investigator will be launched at the gathering. The book tells of the circumstances of the accident and what followed from it.

The commemoration is to conclude with a "fly-over" salute by the two historic airline DC-3s, VH-ABR *Kanana* and VH-AES *Hawdon*

The *Kyeema* memorial cairn, a short distance north of the television masts, is just off Mt Dandenong's Ridge Road behind the area's electricity sub-station (Melway's Map 66 E1). There is parking available nearby.

More Information:

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Organising Committee

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