

## Current Australian Aviation Colour Perception Testing Protocol.

In Australia for the last twenty or so years, the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has applied the following protocol with regard to colour vision testing. The text in Bold Italics is extracted from the DAME Handbook.

***“The DAME is required to conduct a colour perception test, using the Ishihara 24-plate test.***

***This test should be conducted even if the applicant is to be referred to an ophthalmologist.***

***If the applicant should incorrectly identify more than two of the Ishihara plates, a test on a Farnsworth lantern is needed to determine whether or not he or she meets the colour perception standard.”***

***“An applicant who fails to meet the colour perception standard (i.e. who fails both the***

***Ishihara Plate Test and the Farnsworth Lantern, but who meets all other standards) is eligible for issue of an operationally restricted student pilot, private pilot or commercial pilot licence. The holder of such a licence is given a dispensation to operate at night in a suitably radio-equipped aircraft. This dispensation applies to Australian airspace only”.***

***“Class 1 and class 2 applicants who are unable to pass either the Ishihara Plate Test or Farnsworth Lantern Test may be further assessed by means of Practical Signal Light Test. Details are available from Aviation Medicine Section”.***

In practice, those who fail both the Ishihara and the Farnsworth are able to perform all the duties of PPL and CPL, may hold (and use) Command Instrument ratings. There has never been a restriction in regard to the carriage of passengers, either privately or commercially. This has always been the case in Australia in living memory. However, the successful appeals of the late 1980's resulted in the removal of the restriction on night flying, and with this the vast majority of Australian pilots who have defective colour vision, were able to participate fully and without restriction at the PPL and CPL levels.

The access to the “Practical Signal Light Test”, introduced in 1991, gave those CVD pilots who had not passed either the Ishihara or the Farnsworth the opportunity to participate at ATPL level, which is the licence level required for Airline operations. The signal light test can be passed by even the most severe of CVD applicants (but is not always), and this has resulted in growing numbers of CVD pilots of all grades of severity working their way to the top ranks in the Airline industry in Australia. They are deemed to have “met the Standard”. These pilots undergo the exact same initial and ongoing quality control regimes that their colour vision normal peers do, and without any apparent degradation in safety standards.

Given the fact stated in the previous paragraph, there is now a growing doubt about the relevance of the Aviation Colour Perceptions Standard, and in particular, the “Practical Signal Light Test”. The question is soon to be put to the test in a further appeal before the Australian Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This pending appeal will be discussed in detail at the forthcoming Rotorua meeting.

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