

## **NEW EQUIPMENT FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS**

The Department of Civil Aviation has made the first installation of flight progress board equipment at the Essendon Air Traffic Control centre. It has been under test for several weeks and will be put into operation within the next few days. Flight progress boards were developed by the Civil Aeronautics Administration of the United States of America and are installed throughout the entire C.A.A. Air Traffic Control service.

The flight progress board provides the controller with a display of essential flight details so that he can analyse the traffic pattern and ensure smooth, expeditious and safe handling of air traffic. By means of the board the controller can avoid the possibility of collision by seeing that no two aircraft will arrive at any particular point at the same height unless there is adequate time separation between them. It further provides the controller with the means of communicating with pilots, the adjacent controller, the radar operator, the meteorological officer and ground communications stations.

The department decided to adopt flight progress boards only after complete investigation of overseas and local methods and after experiments had determined that this type of equipment was ideally suited to Australian operating conditions. The flight progress board will be able to cope with increase in air route traffic which is likely to occur within the next five years at least.

Recording of essential information, supplied by the pilot before and during his flight, is achieved by using specially authorised abbreviations and symbols which are written on small strips of coloured

cardboard. Each flight is represented by one cardboard strip.

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The controller then knows the altitude of all aircraft under his control, and their estimated times of arrival at specified points along the route. He can, therefore, anticipate any traffic congestion and take suitable remedial action such as requiring a pilot to assume another flight level.

Since the controller bases his control on the information posted on the board, it is essential that all details should be reliable. To ensure this, pilots are required to report their positions at specified points, and a check is made on their ground speeds as they progress from point to point. The controller sees that these reports are received on time, and that the information transmitted by the pilots can be reconciled with the information posted on the flight progress board. Any discrepancies are easily noticed, and the controller can then ask a pilot for verification.

The flight progress board was designed by the department's staff and built in the department's regional workshops at Essendon. It is a nicely engineered piece of equipment with nothing superfluous, and yet it contains all the essentials which will enable the controller to provide an efficient air traffic control service.

Similar flight progress boards will be installed at other Air Traffic Control centres within the next few months.