

THE START OF THE

N707JT was owned by John Travolta for many years after he purchased it from Frank Sinatra. This Boeing 707-138 became an international icon when John was appointed the Ambassador for Qantas and spent many hours/years travelling the globe promoting the history and friendship of our national airline to many countries around the world.

Both the 707 and John Travolta became internationally renowned and the famous V Jet served Qantas well worldwide.

Since Mr Travolta retired from his role with Qantas, the aeroplane (Jett Clipper Ella) became surplus to his requirements and so began the process of parting with his beloved 707. With little response from the aviation marketplace, it was decided to ferry the aircraft from Florida to Brunswick Georgia where it was destined to be cut up for scrap metal value.

Then... along came the Cavalry... HARS.

JT had expressed a great interest in HARS during his many visits to Sydney in his Ambassador's role, his favourite aeroplane being the Super Connie. Having owned one in the past, John was keen to have a fly of Connie, and his dream was fulfilled twice. He was very impressed with the HARS operation, and when, much later, he heard of our interest in the 707, he was delighted to donate his beloved 707 to the HARS Museum, instead of having it recycled.



John Travolta and Bob De La Hunty in the Connie circa 2009.

The V Jet was last flown in 2016 which was the ferry flight to Brunswick. Since then it has remained static and consequently no Airworthy Directives (ADs) or heavy maintenance has been carried out. Thus, a huge task confronted our engineers on our first trip to Georgia.

Being such an enormous project, but nothing HARS has not done before, the plan was drawn up to proceed in three stages.

Stage 1 – The most important step is to obtain a Special Flight Permit (SFP) from CASA. This process involves loads of paperwork and many hours

input from our engineering team. All outstanding ADs have been submitted, along with many AMOCs (Alternate Means of Compliance) and together HARS and CASA are working through this process.

Stage 2 – The second step in this process is setting up a Remote Workshop Facility in Georgia to comply with CASA CAR 30 requirements. The 707 is parked at the Stambaugh Aviation Facility at Brunswick and they have carried out maintenance on the aircraft in the past. They also maintain President Trump's 757 private jet. After meeting with the owners Mark and Scott Stambaugh, it was agreed to work together to get the 707 airworthy again. N707JT is currently under American Registration and therefore any work carried out in the US will come under FAA Regulation and Certification. It is planned to change the registration over to the Australian Registry for the ferry flight home.

Stage 3 – This stage will cover the flight crews and recency and also planning the route to Australia. This is largely dependant on sponsorship and will be revealed in the coming months.

The latest visit to Georgia in August was a real adventure! After arriving at the airport at 9.15am on Sunday



The Boeing 707-138 N707JT.



The Engine.

for a 12.30 departure to Dallas, we were informed that the flight had been cancelled. We were told to hang around in case we got another seat on another flight. This happened, and finally Jim Marshall, Wayne Studdert, Bob De La Hunty and myself were boarding a flight to Los Angeles (NOT DALLAS) at 9.30pm Sunday night.

We arrived in LA at 8.30am Sunday morning (US time), then had a 6 hour wait to connect with a Delta flight to Atlanta Georgia. We were all a little anxious (to say the least) at this stage. After arriving in Atlanta, again we had another 2 hours to wait before leaving for Jacksonville, where we hoped to stay overnight. Finally arriving in Jacksonville at 5.20pm totally beaten up, we decided to continue on and drive to Brunswick where we finally collapsed in our hotel at 6.30pm.

The weather in Georgia is not the best in August; in fact, it is terrible. The heat and humidity were unbearable, what a wonderful greeting for us after the horrific journey to get there. Enough bleating!

The following days resulted in doing the usual checks, engines, instruments and locating components and making a list of all spares and manuals on board. We ordered 2,000 gals of fuel for the engine run which was carried out with precision and Jim was pleased with the result.

After more meetings with Scott and Mark discussing the way forward, they are very happy to assist with the task of getting the 707 airworthy again. We discussed work packages with them and are now waiting for a schedule and costing before proceeding. Stambaugh Aviation have been of great assistance to our HARS team



The Cockpit.



Private bedroom.



Wayne Studdert and Maureen Massey in the HARS Limo.

whilst in Georgia, providing tooling, equipment and personnel whenever required. I thank them sincerely.

We look forward to working together on the maintenance program and most of all seeing N707JT reach for the skies again.

My sincere thanks go to the HARS engineering teams and crews for their continuing support and time taken in researching and providing the necessary paperwork to make this mission happen.



Plush leather interior.