



Clockwise from above - Kubin kids, Kakadu rock art, refuelling central Australian style, aircraft shadow.

rating current. Phil also relies on MAF for technical matters, relating to the operation of the Cessna 206.

Very few of the strips that are visited by Phil, are well-maintained bitumen - in fact most of them are rough bush strips. Over time, this of course takes a real toll on aircraft, particularly propellers. This was the case with BXT, so recently Phil was able to purchase a new propeller for his aircraft, which has a smaller diameter than the original, so will be less prone to damage on these country strips.

Phil shares that there have been several scary moments in his bush flying experience of almost 5000hrs. One of his most unusual passengers was a live crocodile, that remained secured in the under belly pod of the 206.

The weather in the top end can be very treacherous. He recounts a day when flying away from cyclone Mark, he learnt about 'waves' where cyclonic weather radiates from the centre. Phil thought he was heading into clear weather, only to encounter another wave, and was then pushed north off the coast eventually landing at Elcho Island, grateful for his decision to leave with maximum fuel.

Thunderstorms have also taught him a lesson or two. Once when departing from a small outstation strip, Phil checked the windsock and found the wind to favour RW27. The strip had a small rise in the centre, which then obscured the windsock from the beginning of the take-off roll. He started the take off roll, and on reaching his abort point on the runway, found his airspeed very low. As the windsock came into view, it was now showing a downwind of approx 35kts.



Fortunately the aircraft was at its lowest operating weight and Phil was able to complete the take-off. He chose to climb at V_x and held the airspeed despite the temptation to pull nose up. The aircraft cleared the trees at the end of the strip and climbed very slowly.

Outback ministry is often lonely and discouraging, so there are many reasons why only certain people are suited for it. It takes a dedicated and special person to make themselves available for this vital work. The visit from the bible aircraft, is often the only contact that people who live in these remote areas have, for weeks at a

time. Phil will usually try and let communities know that he is coming, and always fields requests to bring items with him, that they have run out of, or need urgently. It is very easy for those of us who live in the comfort of larger communities to lose sight of the difficulties that our remote cousins endure.

