



# 20 YEARS BAROSSA HELICOPTERS

## 20 year celebration

BAROSSA Helicopters have been running choppers out of the Barossa Valley since 1986.

The oldest helicopter company in South Australia, they also have the distinguishing feature of being completely family owned and operated.

A four-person operation, with Peter "Goose" Kies as chief pilot, and his wife Sandra running the day-to-day management of the business behind the scenes, their two daughters also play a fundamental role - Bridgette and Billie-Jo Kies work alongside their father as pilots in the company's three helicopters.

Barossa Helicopters certainly is a quality operation.

Pretty much anything you can do in a helicopter, they have the expertise and the will to do it.

Best ride ever and a fantastic proposal too - Amanda and Michael from Nuriootpa, SA.

Words can not begin to describe - Jai from Modbury Heights, SA.

In the summer time, they are kept busy flying regular scenic flights for tourists around the beautiful surrounds of the Barossa Valley, and even further afield into regional Victoria. When they're not doing joy flights, the guys are kept busy with survey work, agricultural work, property inspections, executive transfers, and even filming and photography for movies and commercials.

It was in fact camera work, of a sort, that first got the girls' dad Goose Kies interested in choppers.

His father had run a fixed-wing business out of the family's farm in the Barossa Valley (now also the base of operations for Barossa Helicopters) from a landing strip he had on the property.

One day in the early 1980s, Channel Nine were down filming parachutists in the area, using the Kies' landing strip to take off from in a plane they had for the occasion. It was on this day that Peter Kies caught



**PERFECT LANDING:** Barossa Helicopter's VH-BHV on a sand dune allowing the guests out to do some sightseeing.

the chopper bug.

The plane held little interest for him - he already had a fixed-wing licence, and by this stage, for whatever reason fixed-wing flight had lost interest for him.

Accompanying the plane that day, though, was a chopper, a Bell 206 that the Channel Nine crew were using to pick up the parachutists, post-jump.

Goose managed to convince the pilot, Clive Lipscombe, to let him tag along on one of the taxi runs, and was instantly hooked.

A short while later, and he was off sitting his private pilot licence (PPL), with a CPL soon to follow, this time with Clive Lipscombe as his instructor out at Parafield Airport. Although he probably didn't realise it then, the seed was sown for what would later become

Fantastic experience, first time for all of us - Griffiths Family, United Kingdom.

Barossa Helicopters.

Barossa Helicopters started out slowly at first, more as an enthusiasm than a fully-fledged business - the odd tourist flight here and there to supplement the cost of leasing a chopper to fly in.

They were lucky enough to have the help of some very supportive individuals from within the local helicopter industry in the early days.

Murray Bolton, who operated Capricorn helicopters out of

Alice Springs at the time, loaned the fledgling operation his Hughes 300 to get them going. A few years down the track, after what had been just a passion morphed into a successful helicopter operation, Murray ended up becoming Barossa's chief pilot for a little while, and taught the family a lot about the day-to-day running of a helicopter business.

The company is today doing well.

They recently sold their Jetranger, in its stead they now run two, brand new Robinson R44s, which brings the Barossa fleet to a healthy total of three helicopters, inclusive of a Long Ranger based in Darwin with Jayrow Helicopters.

Unlike the turbine choppers, which can only be kicked on and off a limited number of times-per-day, the R44 runs like a car, and can be happily kicked on and off all day to no ill effect. Which means, that the operation can now fly even more than ever before.

Goose Kies' father might not have passed his passion for fixed-wing flight on to his son, but the chopper bug, it seems, is hereditary.

With two generations of passionate helicopter pilots driving the business, Barossa Helicopters is here to stay.

Great flight. Well worth the trip - Pete and Andrea from Melbourne, Victoria.

Truly a piece of heaven - Les from Toronto, Canada.

### Scenic Tours

**Flight Description:** 10 minute helicopter tour. Leaving base in the Hoffnungsthal Valley flying onto Rowland Flat, home of the famous Jacobs Creek, back over Lyndoch onto the famous Whispering Wall incorporating unsurpassed views of the picturesque valley floor. Numbers: 2-3 people.

**Flight Description:** 20 minute helicopter tour. Leaving base in the Hoffnungsthal Valley onto the famous Jacobs Creek and Rowland Flat over Tanunda, seeing many fine wineries, then over to Seppeltsfield Winery back to Lyndoch and the Whispering Wall. Numbers: 2-3 people.

**Flight Description:** 30 minute tour. This flight leaves our base in the Hoffnungsthal Valley flying over the Seppeltsfield Winery and surrounding vineyards, then onto Nuriootpa, over Angaston known for its lime marble quarries and Lindsay Park Stud, flying back over the valley floor past Tanunda, you will see many fine old historic buildings and churches from yesteryear before flying onto the famous Whispering Wall and back to base. Numbers: 1-3 people.



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### Chopper chicks



**READY TO FLY:** Bridgette (left) and Billie-Jo Kies of Barossa Helicopters are ready to give clients the ride of their lives.

THE Kies sisters, Bridgette and Billie-Jo, grew up living and breathing choppers.

When pressed for their first memorable experience in a helicopter, both of the sisters draw a blank.

Neither can recall how old they were when they first went up, for the simple reason that both would have been too young to remember.

Bridgette reckons at most one or two-years-old. You could almost say, they were born to it.

It comes as no surprise, then, that when they finished school both of the sisters went on to take their commercial pilot licence (CPL). Bridgette was the first to undertake training and sit the exam. By the time she had qualified, she still was only 18-years-old - Australia's youngest ever female commercial helicopter pilot.

"I've been involved in helicopters my whole life - mum and dad have had the helicopters for 20 years in the Barossa," says Bridgette.

"Basically Billie and I have both grown up around them - I started ground staffing when I was 12-years-old, and then I started flying

about a month after I turned 17.

"I went solo in the R22 for my training up at Chopperline, but we had our engineers at Tadgell Aviation Services rebuilding a helicopter for us, the JetRanger, so I also got to do some of my licence in that," Bridgette recalls.

"Going solo in the JetRanger was probably one of the most terrifying things ever for me, much scarier than any of my training before that. A JetRanger is a pretty big helicopter when you're only 17 - when you're sitting in the front and all there is next to you is a 20-litre water container holding the nose down. It's pretty nerve-racking."

Billie-Jo took a completely different experience away from her training. For her, it was the R22 that proved to be the more intimidating of the two aircraft.

"I didn't really like flying the 22s to start with, they're so small," says Billie-Jo. "All I'd seen were JetRangers. When I did get in a JetRanger it actually felt like I was flying a proper helicopter."

At the close of her training, Billie-Jo got the chance to fly one home, kicking off her piloting career with a cross country ferry all the way home to the Barossa Valley from Kestrel Aviation in Mangalore, Victoria.

Between them, the girls reckon they would rack up a whopping 300 hours each per year.

The girls are ready to add to those hours allowing clients to enjoy the sights of the valley and SA on a Barossa Helicopter tour.

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*Congratulations on 20 years  
in business "Keep Flying High".*

**Bazz and Sue Ward**

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