

Use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (Drones) in Schools

AISNSW has received a number of enquiries relating to the use of drones in schools and whether any policy has been developed about their use. The principal issues relating to the operation of drones relate to safety of the user and others who may be affected by its operation, aviation regulations and potentially privacy legislation.

Aviation Regulation

The Civil Aviation Safety Regulations set out the rules for flying drones for recreational purposes, which apply, from 29 September 2016. The CASA website summarises the requirements as follows:

- You should only fly a drone in visual line-of-sight, in day visual meteorological conditions (VMC).
What does that mean?
 - No night flying (generally)
 - No flying in or through cloud or fog, and you should
 - Be able to see the aircraft with your own eyes (rather than through first-person-view [FPV, binoculars, telescopes]) at all time. Unless you operate it under the procedures of approved model-flying association. Contact the [MAAA \[http://www.maaa.asn.au/\]](http://www.maaa.asn.au/) for more information about flying FPV.
- You must not fly closer than 30 metres to vehicles, boats, buildings or people.
- You must not fly over populous areas such as beaches, heavily populated parks or sports ovals while they are in use.
- In controlled airspace, which covers most Australian cities, you must not fly higher than 120 metres (400 feet) above the ground.
- You must not fly in a way that creates a hazard to other aircraft, so you should keep at least 5.5km away from airfields, aerodromes and helicopter landing sites.

For further information, visit CASA www.casa.gov.au/modelaircraft

Safety

There is potential for a drone, even a small drone, to cause damage or injury to the operator or others. The rules imposed by CASA are designed to prevent accidents involving aircraft or to people.

When undertaking activities using RPAs schools should:

- Undertake a risk assessment to factor in the use of operation and use of the drone, having particular regard to their own circumstances and the proposed use of the drone, the location of the school and the age of the proposed users.
- Establish school specific safe operating protocols for the use of drones by staff and students, including but not limited to safe operating procedures, pre and post flight checks and ongoing maintenance of the drone.
- Consider the effect of the use of drones on neighbours. Flying drones over populated areas exposed to complaints and liability even if no injury occurs or is likely.

Privacy

Issues of privacy may arise where cameras are attached to drones with a view to taking pictures from the air. The Surveillance Devices Act in New South Wales is unlikely to apply to the use of such devices. However, the use of the devices to photograph identifiable people may constitute the collection of personal information and become subject to the provisions of the Commonwealth Privacy Act if the school is found to be collecting that information. Where cameras are to be used, it is strongly recommended that the use be carefully controlled.