

Drones in schools – use of remotely piloted aircraft for educational purposes – policy

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Scope	3
3. Drone requirements	3
3.1. Aviation regulation.....	3
3.1.1. Purpose of use.....	3
3.1.2. Weight of the drone.....	3
3.1.2.1. Micro RPA category.....	3
3.1.2.2. Drones larger than Micro RPA	4
3.1.3. Where the drone is flown	4
3.1.4. Safety	4
3.1.5. Recommendation for an aviation reference number	4
3.1.6. Privacy.....	5
4. Roles and responsibilities	5
5. Definitions	5
6. Related Legislation and resources	6
6.1. National.....	6
6.2. Northern Territory	6

1. Introduction

All users of remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) commonly known as drones, must abide by civil aviation legislation and regulations when operating their aircraft. These legislative and regulatory requirements facilitate the safe use of drones, mitigate personal health and safety risks and address privacy regulations.

This policy provides a consistent approach to drone management and use in, or by, Northern Territory government schools. All school staff must have sound knowledge of the regulatory, safety and privacy obligations attached to the use of drones in schools or for educational purposes. Breaches of the [Civil Aviation Act 1988](#) (Cth) or the [Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998](#) (Cth) can result in significant fines or imprisonment.

This policy is to be used with the Drones in schools – use of remotely piloted aircraft for educational purposes – checklist and risk assessment form when planning any drone flying activities for educational purposes.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all schools and educational settings
- drone use by staff or students on school grounds or for educational purposes.

3. Drone requirements

3.1. Aviation regulation

The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) regulates the use of drones in Australia. Rules imposed by CASA are designed to prevent accidents involving aircraft, property or people. The Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 prescribe operating conditions for all unmanned aircraft, including drones. Drone operators are also obliged to meet any requirements of drone usage stipulated in local, state and federal laws and to check for [CASA drone rules](#) and directives as they are released.

3.1.1. Purpose of use

The law relating to use of drones distinguishes between recreational or commercial purposes. CASA recognises that drones for educational purposes are categorised as recreational use unless the operator is intending to receive money or economic gain.

3.1.2. Weight of the drone

Different drone weight categories determine where they may be flown. A drone's weight includes any fittings or camera attached to the drone.

3.1.2.1. Micro RPA category

Drones in the Micro RPA category:

- may fly within 5.5km of a controlled aerodrome with height limitations.

3.1.2.2. Drones larger than Micro RPA

Drones larger than Micro RPA:

- must not fly within 5.5km of a controlled aerodrome without approval from CASA
- may fly within 5.5km of an uncontrolled aerodrome or helicopter landing site (HLS) only if manned aircraft are not operating to or from the aerodrome.

3.1.3. Where the drone is flown

Before flying a drone, you must review the recreational drone rules on the [CASA Know your drone website](#), and it is recommended that you download a drone safety app from the [CASA Drone safety apps webpage](#). There are a number of rules affecting where a drone can be flown, including:

- proximity to controlled air space, controlled and uncontrolled aerodromes
- proximity to prohibited, restricted and danger areas that have additional requirements
- the drone remaining within visual line-of-sight of the operator
- not over or above people or in a populous area
- not higher than 120 metres above the ground
- at least 30 metres away from other people unless the other person is part of controlling or navigating the drone, measured from a point on the ground directly underneath the drone
- not over or near areas affecting public safety or where emergency operations are underway.

To operate outside these conditions, it is necessary to acquire authorisation or exemption from CASA and either secure a remote pilot licence (RePL) or obtain an aviation reference number (ARN).

Educators must determine if they are subject to additional federal, state, local council, Northern Territory (NT) parks and reserves or national park rules or laws, prohibiting or restricting drone use in certain areas.

Educators must check the CASA recreational drone rules regularly, to ensure compliance.

3.1.4. Safety

The Department of Education has a duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and to ensure that others, including students within learning environments, are not put at risk. There is potential for a drone, even a small drone, to cause damage or injury to the operator or others. As well as CASA regulations, safety requirements contained within the [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011](#) and the [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Regulations 2011](#) must be adhered to.

3.1.5. Recommendation for an aviation reference number

Schools or teachers implementing drone programs could consider obtaining an ARN – information is available by visiting the [CASA website](#). You need an ARN if you intend holding any sort of authorisation – permissions or licence. Schools considering investing in drones must research the types and attributes of potential drones as some are not suitable for school use.

3.1.6. Privacy

Schools must consider the impact of drones on neighbours or those near the area of operation. Drones can be considered intrusive and noisy. Flying drones can give rise to complaints and liability even if no injury occurs or is likely to occur. Schools must ensure they comply with their obligations under the [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth).

4. Roles and responsibilities

School principals are accountable for ensuring:

- school operated drones comply with this policy and all statutory requirements
- the school has established operating protocols that must include:
 - identifying specific drone safe flying areas
 - all participants must wear safety glasses
 - long hair is to be tied back
- the Drones in schools – use of remotely piloted aircraft for educational purposes – checklist and risk assessment form has been completed, including consideration of the proposed use of the drone, the location of the school and the age of the proposed users.

Teachers, instructors and trainers must:

- inform the school principal of intention to fly a drone
- check the CASA website for changes to regulations before using a drone
- understand the implications of noncompliance with all rules and regulations
- complete a Risk assessment form
- make the expectations and rules relating to flying drones clear to students
- complete pre and post flight checks and ongoing maintenance of the drone
- be aware of any cultural or privacy concerns in relation to photography of students or property.

5. Definitions

Term	Definition
Aviation reference number (ARN)	A unique identifier to be quoted whenever you call CASA. If you hold a licence or permission, you will find in most cases that the number on the licence or permission is the ARN belonging to the entity that holds that licence or permission.
Commercial drone use	Flying a drone for money or economic gain, for a fee, rate, charge or other consideration, or directly or indirectly in connection with any business, or other undertaking intended for profit. This includes organisations delivering lessons or demonstrations to students for a fee.
Controlled aerodrome	Within a 5.5km radius of an aerodrome with a manned control tower.

Term	Definition
Drone	A colloquial term for an unmanned aircraft, other than a balloon or kite, where the pilot flying is not on board the aircraft. RPAs are commonly known as drones.
Micro RPA	An RPA with a gross weight of 250 grams or less. This weight is regularly reviewed by CASA. Educators must check the CASA website prior to any drone activity.
Operating a drone for educational purposes	The operation of a drone for educational purposes in an NTG school and is classified by CASA as recreational, as long as it is not operated to advertise or promote the school or to receive money.
Operator	The person who manipulates the flight controls of a remotely piloted aircraft or who initiates and monitors the flight and is responsible for its safe conduct during flight time.
Recreational drone use	Flying a drone for fun, pleasure or enjoyment, not for money or economic gain.
Regulator	The regulator referred to in this policy is the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).
Uncontrolled aerodrome	An aerodrome without a manned control tower.

6. Related Legislation and resources

6.1. National

Civil Aviation Act 1988

Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Privacy Act 1988

6.2. Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011

NT Government Parks and Reserves [Permits to use drones in parks webpage](#).

Acronyms	Full form
ARN	Aviation reference number
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
Cth	Commonwealth
HLS	Helicopter Landing Site
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
RePL	Remote Pilot Licence
RPA	Remotely Piloted Aircraft
TRM	Territory Records Manager

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