

# Remote Piloted Aircraft (Drones) Policy and Procedure

## Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') recognises the value, applications and potential for innovation of remote piloted aircraft (RPA), colloquially referred to as "drones," in various environments including technical, educational and artistic purposes. CDU is committed to supporting the applications of RPAs within the legislative requirements of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and associated [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011 NT](#) requirements.

## Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This document sets out the principles by which CDU employs RPAs and the procedure by which pilots or other people involved in the use of RPAs may employ RPAs within and on behalf of CDU.

(3) This document does not provide comprehensive details on the operation of RPAs or the specific requirements of remote pilots and other people involved in the use of RPAs. These details are provided in the documentation referenced in clause 5, below.

## Section 3 - Scope

(4) This policy and procedure applies to all RPA operations carried out by students, staff, visitors and third-party contractors:

- a. for any purpose within CDU campuses and property; or
- b. for University business away from CDU campuses and property.

## Section 4 - Policy

(5) CDU recognises that RPAs fall under the authority of CASA and associated legislation and regulation in the following order:

- a. [Civil Aviation Act 1988](#) (Cth);
- b. [Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998](#) (Cth), including Part 101 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998;
- c. [Privacy Act 1988](#) (Cth);
- d. [Part 101 Manual of Standards](#);
- e. [Part 101 Advisory Circular](#); and
- f. [Plain English Guide – Micro and Excluded RPA Operations](#).

(6) Specific processes and conditions regarding remote pilot licence (RePL) training and licencing are not covered in

this document and can be found in the documentation listed above.

(7) All RPA operations undertaken within University grounds must be compliant with the legislation and regulations listed in clause 5.

(8) All RPA work conducted on behalf of the University must either be conducted in Micro and Excluded RPA Operations or conducted under the procedures set out in a remotely piloted aircraft operator's certificate (ReOC) operations manual (OPSMAN).

(9) CDU recognises and works to minimise the risks presented by RPAs, including to aviation, work health and safety and privacy. In particular, the University will work to ensure that CDU RPA operations present no risk or threat to conventional air traffic, particularly that of the Darwin International Airport.

(10) CASA has strict regulations that apply to RPA operators. The University has an obligation to maintain the safety of students, staff, visitors and contractors and comply with legislation, regulation and rulings of the relevant regulators.

## **Section 5 - Procedure**

### **Responsibilities**

(11) Managers and supervisors responsible for RPA operations or activities involving RPA operations must ensure that staff, students and contractors are aware of their responsibilities under the documentation in clause 5 when using RPAs for the University.

(12) Remote pilots and operators are part of the aviation industry and have responsibilities under clause 5 regulations. Remote pilot licence (RePL) qualified pilots or RPA operators at the University must operate within the requirements of the relevant legislative requirements and all relevant University governance documents.

(13) RPA operators and RePL pilots must ensure that the safety and privacy of others is taken into consideration during RPA operations.

### **Requirements**

(14) Confirmation of a RePL or operator's accreditation is a mandatory requirement prior to operating RPAs for any purpose under the auspices of the University.

(15) Remote pilots, operators, and any other person involved in the operations of RPAs are required to consider their fitness for duty prior to undertaking an operation and must consider the requirements of basic health outlined in the regulation at clause 5.

(16) Unless flying in the Micro and Excluded RPA Operations category, all RPA operators working under the authority of a ReOC must be inducted into the ReOC and must hold a valid RePL issued by CASA for the type and rating of RPA being operated.

### **Approval procedure**

(17) There are two approval processes for flying RPAs, dependent on the weight of the aircraft, the type of flight, and the conditions of the airspace. Pilots and operators must be aware of and follow the approval procedure for each.

### **Micro and Excluded RPA Operations Approvals**

(18) Micro and Excluded RPA Operations usually do not require that the operator hold a RePL or ReOC. However,

operators using an excluded RPA for work or study must:

- a. obtain an Aviation Reference Number;
- b. Hold a valid RPA Operator accreditation;
- c. Register the RPA with CASA;
- d. Depending on the weight of the RPA, only operate over land owned by the RPA Operator; and
- e. operate the RPA in standard RPA operating conditions as defined in the documentation in clause 5 at all times unless holding an approval from CASA.

(19) RPA operations outside CDU property, such as remote fieldwork, must be approved by the relevant Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or research unit director, through the risk assessment and field work approval process.

### **Non-Micro and Non-Excluded RPA Operations**

(20) All RPAS and RPAS flights that do not meet the limitations of the Micro and Excluded RPA Operations need to be flown with in the following requirements:

- a. The pilot holds an RePL;
- b. The pilot operates under a ReOC;
- c. Written approval from the Chief Remote Pilot to commence project;
- d. Induction;
- e. Training;
- f. Regular currency flights;
- g. A submitted job safety assessment (JSA) for each flight;
- h. Written or verbal approval of the JSA by the Chief Remote Pilot before launching on each flight;
- i. Abide by all procedures listed in the ReOC's OPSMAN and mitigations in the JSA; and
- j. Enter a costs agreement with the ReOC as agreed to by the director of the ReOC.

(21) The Chief Remote Pilot will review the flight plan and assess the risks for the proposed RPA operation. The Chief Remote Pilot may require further information or:

- a. additional information or identification of risks prior to approval;
- b. additional required steps to be undertaken prior to, or during the mission; and
- c. additional requirements on the operation such as, but not limited to:
  - i. phone calls to controlling authorities;
  - ii. radio broadcasts to crewed aviation traffic;
  - iii. flight parameter requirements;
  - iv. flight path requirements; and
  - v. crew requirements.

(22) Once the Chief Remote Pilot is satisfied that the operation has met all appropriate requirements and has a suitable risk management plan, they may approve the operation.

(23) Additionally, all non-micro and non-excluded RPA operations requests must comply with CDU fieldwork processes. Risk assessments must outline:

- a. the activity to be undertaken;
- b. any risks that may impact on the operation;

- c. any risks that the operation may create; and
- d. control measures to mitigate identified risks and hazards.

## **Non-University remote pilot operators, remote pilots-in-command and university property**

(24) Non-University Remote Pilots and Operators must not operate on behalf of the University or operate as Remote Pilot Operators for any University owned RPAs without the prior written approval from the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or Associate Dean Research and the Chief Remote Pilot.

## **Privacy requirements**

(25) Under the [Privacy Act 1988](#), any footage taken from an RPA must not identify an individual without their prior consent.

## **Insurance**

(26) All RPAs used in University RPA Operations by University staff and students must be:

- a. owned by the University;
- b. listed in the University asset register, if purchase price qualifies them as an asset; and
- c. noted on the University insurance policy.

(27) Non-University owned RPAs may not be used for CDU RPA Operations.

(28) RPAs that are not owned by the University must not be used over University premises for any reason under any circumstances by University staff, students, or visitors.

(29) Private or recreational RPAs will not come under University RPA Insurance Policy.

(30) All Remote Pilots must be approved by the insurer and listed on CDU's Remotely Piloted Aircraft System insurance policy before they can undertake any University authorised RPA operation.

(31) All RPAs and associated equipment operated by the Remote Pilot or Operator must be approved by the insurer and listed on University's Remotely Piloted Aircraft System insurance policy before they can be flown.

(32) Insurance cover is not automatic and will require the Remote Pilot or Operator to contact University Treasury to arrange cover. Insurance cover is only in place once confirmation has been received from the insurer.

(33) If a claim is made on University Remotely Piloted Aircraft System insurance policy as a result of a University RPA Operation, an excess may apply. Any excess will be the responsibility of the owner of the RPA.

## **Incident reporting**

(34) In the event of any incident, the Remote Pilot or Operator or other support personnel, such as the Spotter/Observer, are to report the incident by contacting:

- a. 000 if anyone is injured and requires emergency treatment;
- b. Local air traffic controllers;
- c. The Chief Remote Pilot;
- d. The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or Associate Dean Research;
- e. Manager Work Health and Safety; and
- f. Any additional parties identified during the Pre-Flight Risk Assessment;

(35) The Remote Pilot or Operator or other support personnel must also:

- a. document and photograph all aspects of the incident immediately and on location and report the incident using the HSE Accident, Incident or Injury Report Form in accordance with University Incident and Investigation procedure;
- b. assist with the investigation of the incident if required, ensuring processes and documentation are amended to incorporate recommendations; and
- c. implement all corrective actions from the investigation to minimise the opportunity for any repeat of similar incidents.

(36) Accidents and serious incidents (commonly called Immediately Reportable Matters), which affect the safety of crewed aircraft must, in the first instance, be notified to the Australian Transport Safety Bureau by calling 1800 011 034 (24 hours). If calling from outside Australia, call +61 2 6230 4470.

(37) Managers and supervisors must ensure complaints regarding alleged breaches of CASA requirements or the Operations Manual are dealt with quickly and effectively at the lowest possible level.

## Section 6 - Non-Compliance

(38) Non-compliance with governance documents is considered a breach of the [Code of Conduct - Employees](#) or the [Code of Conduct - Students](#), as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the [Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025](#) and the [Code of Conduct - Students](#).

(39) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the [Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees](#) and [Complaints Policy - Students](#).

(40) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](#) and [Whistleblower Reporting \(Improper Conduct\) Procedure](#).

## Status and Details

|                               |                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Status</b>                 | Current                                                                                    |
| <b>Effective Date</b>         | 1st September 2026                                                                         |
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| <b>Approval Date</b>          | 1st September 2026                                                                         |
| <b>Expiry Date</b>            | Not Applicable                                                                             |
| <b>Responsible Executive</b>  | Steve Rogers<br>Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection<br>+61 8 89466890 |
| <b>Implementation Officer</b> | Rebecca Ludgate<br>Chief Remote Pilot                                                      |
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Governance document"** - means policy or procedure published in the Governance Document Library. Policies and procedures are collectively called 'governance documents' and are often referred to as 'policy' or 'University policy'.