



Drones in Police surveillance – strategic advantage or threat to privacy?

The use of drones in police operations, emergency management and agriculture is rapidly increasing and has real benefits for society. However, at what point does this helpful technology start to invade privacy? A second roundtable on this topic will be held this week by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, in Brisbane.

Drones are quickly becoming cheaper, more accessible to consumers and adaptable to use in a range of different sectors, including for policing, fire and rescue operations and scientific research. However, this expansion increases the likelihood that individuals' privacy is invaded – whether intentionally or by accident – and evidence suggests that Australia's privacy framework might not be up to the task.

At its first roundtable the Committee heard from numerous participants that, while drone technology is becoming more efficient and technically sophisticated, privacy laws relating to drones are 'unclear', with a 'patchwork' that varies between states and territories. This creates confusion for users of drones and the public.

The additional roundtable in Brisbane will provide the committee the opportunity to gain greater insight into the privacy implications, as well as positive uses, of drone technology.

The roundtable will have two focussed sessions, with representatives from the following sectors:

- Law enforcement and emergency management; and
- Agricultural and commercial applications.

Participants will include Queensland Police, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Australian Research Centre for Aerospace Automation, AgForce Queensland and two drone providers.

The Committee Chair, Mr Christensen also said 'The committee recognises the opportunities this technology provides and is interested in how the use of this technology can be maximised to benefit society. Drones are a cheap way to carry out work that is dangerous, dirty or repetitive. However, we are also very conscious of the complexity of Australia's existing privacy laws, and the potential for drones to affect privacy in new ways.'

The roundtable will be held on Friday 21 March 2014 in Committee Room 3, State Parliament House, Brisbane, commencing at 9.30am. Members of the public are welcome to attend. A full program has been posted to the Committee website at this [link](#) and a live audio stream of the roundtable will be available on the APH website at www.aph.gov.au.

For media comment – please contact Dave Westman in the Chair's office on (07) 4944 0662.

For inquiry information – please contact the Secretariat:

(02) 6277 2358 | spla.reps@aph.gov.au | www.aph.gov.au/spla
