



COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

: Your Ref

HQ2016/0207 : Our Ref

Dr Jane Thomson
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and
Transport
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Thomson

***Inquiry into Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Unmanned Aerial
Systems and associated systems***

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry.

In reviewing the current situation I note the changes to Regulation Part 101 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations which came into effect on 29 September 2016. The Northern Territory (NT) Police Force commenced an application for a Remote Operator Certificate (ReOC) prior to this date to develop a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) capability, and I am pleased to say that this application has subsequently been approved CASA and recently issued our Certificate.

The notable changes to the Regulations relate to the requirement that a Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) ReOC is no longer required for commercial operators where the weight of the aircraft is <2kg and an increase in the maximum permissible weight to 25kg for holders of a remote pilot licence (RePL) and RPA ReOC. Because of the other provisions of Regulation Part 101 which limit where and how RPAS units can operate without exemption, this does not have a significant bearing on police operations.

For police forces to utilise specific exemptions required for our operations, a ReOC is still the most appropriate means of regulating the use of RPAS by police forces.

The uses and functionality of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) continues to evolve. To that end, the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES) continues to explore appropriate and lawful use in the law enforcement, evidence gathering and emergency services space.

I do however, foresee some implications which may impact on the police use of RPAS and on police operations in general. In summary, these would include:

- increased media presence in/over police areas of operations (search and rescue and other police operations) which may put at risk the safety of members of the public and the police response;
- increased use of civilian RPAS over police operations through curiosity with the same risks identified above; and
- due to these types of systems, it would be easier and cheaper to purchase along with an increased technological capability (night vision, ability to record etc), an increase risk that criminal elements may adopt this technology.

The following recommendations are provided for the Committee's consideration:

- It would be recommended that police be able to close airspace around a specific police operation to all forms of RPAS; and
- Legislative ability to stop or remove RPAS in a police operations area.

Within the context of Northern Territory legislation, the NTPFES ensures compliance with the requisite sections of the *Surveillance Devices Act* (NT) which regulate the usage of surveillance devices in the Northern Territory.

Should you require any further information please contact Director Secretariat, Governance and Protocol on 08 8901 0271 or by email at secretariat.pfes@pfes.nt.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Kate Vanderlaan APM
Acting Commissioner of Police

 December 2016