



Our reference: DGC162121

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Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee
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Dear Members of the Committee

**INQUIRY INTO REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (RPAS),
UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEMS (UAS) AND ASSOCIATED SYSTEMS**

Thank you for your invitation of the 25 October 2016 to make a submission related to your inquiry into RPAS, UAS and associated systems.

As an introduction, I would note that it is expected that world population growth in the next forty years from six billion to approximately nine billion will bring enormous challenges for world food security. Australia is an exporter of food and as an example is ranked third in world wheat exports and therefore plays an important role in providing security for a key staple food in the human diet.

The challenge of food security was highlighted by Fresco and Rabbinge, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (1997), with the following comment: "... estimates indicate that the additional quantity of food that will need to be produced over the next forty years will equal the total quantity of food production since agriculture began. To produce this amount will require us to double or triple production per hectare."

The Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia's strategic plan aligns with the Agrifood 2025+ initiative through which the department aims to support industry to double the value of the sector by 2025.

Western Australian farms today are adopting automation for precision agriculture that is designed to grow more food with less labour, fuel and chemicals. Farmers need ready access to innovative technology including RPAS for spraying, inspecting fences, livestock watering points, remote sensing for mapping irrigation problems, soil variation, pest issues and crop nutrient status.

Our current aerial spraying regulatory requirements are in the *Aerial Spraying Control Act 1966*. This requires a person to hold a commercial pilot's licence, endorsed with an agricultural rating and pass a chemical safety exam. A remote pilot licence is not a commercial pilot's licence so an RPAS for aerial spraying cannot be licenced under our current Act.

New regulations under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* are being drafted to replace the current Act and allow authorisation of pilots of all aircraft types including RPAS. The central provision will be a regulation providing that a person must not apply an agricultural chemical product from an aircraft unless they have the qualifications prescribed by the regulations. The proposed qualification is the Aerial Agricultural Association of Australia 'Spraysafe' course.

Currently most state jurisdictions have aerial spraying requirements that duplicate the business and pilot licencing of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA). Our new legislation will reduce red tape by only requiring the pilot to have a qualification for chemical safety without a state licencing requirement.

Recent amendments to CASA regulations Part 101 are supported as they cut red tape for low risk remotely piloted aircraft operations. This will make it easier for primary producers to access this technology.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to the outcomes of your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

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