



AUSTRALIAN SENATE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

REFERENCES COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

Inquiry into the regulatory requirements that impact the safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Unmanned Aerial Systems and associated systems

The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee (committee) is currently conducting an inquiry into the regulatory requirements that impact on the safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Unmanned Aerial Systems and associated systems (drones).

As the inquiry has progressed, it has become apparent to the committee that the safety regulations regarding drone use have not kept up with a rapidly-growing industry, and that immediate action should be taken to make drone use safer. In particular, there are growing concerns both within the aviation industry and amongst the general public about the safety of recreational drone use. These concerns emanate from an increasing number of reports of aviation incidents and mounting fears of the real prospect of a serious accident.

It is of considerable concern to the committee that recreational drone users are not required to register themselves or their equipment before flying a drone. In order to reduce the prospect of a serious accident, it has become clear to the committee that the regulatory regime must be strengthened. As a first step, recreational users must be educated and trained so they have a minimum level of aeronautical knowledge. Safeguards (including tracking) should be established to protect Australia's air space and the general public.

The committee wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, the Hon Darren Chester MP in April strongly encouraging strengthened regulation of this sector in three key areas:

Safety awareness and training – recreational drone users should have to undergo training and safety awareness before purchasing and using drones;

Registration and tracking – the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) should be empowered to track all individual drones, starting with the registration of all drones, regardless of their size or intended use; and

Aviation safety – to minimise the potential for collisions between drones and aircraft and to protect controlled airspace and airports, geofencing technology should be introduced for individual drones and/or drone shields should be employed in high traffic areas.

The committee will further consider these and other safety measures, including mandatory flight logging and the display of registration marks, during the course of the inquiry before reporting to the Senate on 6 December 2017.

Further information: Senator Glenn Sterle, Chair, (08) 9455 1420.