

**Question on notice no. 185**

**Portfolio question number: SQ25-002705**

**2025-26 Supplementary Budget estimates**

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee, Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts  
Portfolio**

**Senator Bridget McKenzie:** asked the Civil Aviation Safety Authority on 12 December 2025—

(1. Questions taken on notice from Senate Estimates in October (SQ25-002230) regarding the median processing time for applications for RPAS was reported as being 78 days.

Additional comments provided were:

"We expect this to further reduce as we roll out initiatives such as Broad Area Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) approvals".

When will this initiative be rolled out?

2. An application to fly a "complex drone operation" requires a specific area approval, and the specific area approval takes upward of 12 months from application submission to issuing of the instrument. Is that correct?

3. Is CASA aware of the effect these long wait times are having on the industry?

4. What responses have been given to stakeholders who have indicated that these wait times are 'crippling' the industry?

5. Has the Minister raised any concerns with CASA regarding long wait times for approvals for RPAS's?

6. Has the Department raised any concerns with CASA regarding long wait times for approvals for RPAS's?

7. Is CASA exploring alternative approval models for speeding up approvals for complex operators?

8. Does CASA have the ability to use delegates (industry experts) as additional industry-funded resources to assess applications.

9. What is CASA waiting for to adopt a delegate model?

10. Once an approval is granted, if commercial requirements dictate a change in some details of the instrument, what is the timing to apply these minor changes?

11. How does CASA plan to address this?

**Answer —**

Please see PDF attachment.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2025-2026

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 185

Departmental Question Number: SQ25-002705

Division/Agency Name: Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Hansard Reference: Written (12 December 2025)

Topic: CASA - Long wait times for Remote Piloted Aircraft Systems applications

**Bridget McKenzie asked:**

1. Questions taken on notice from Senate Estimates in October (SQ25-002230) regarding the median processing time for applications for RPAS was reported as being 78 days. Additional comments provided were:  
“We expect this to further reduce as we roll out initiatives such as Broad Area Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) approvals”. When will this initiative be rolled out?
2. An application to fly a “complex drone operation” requires a specific area approval, and the specific area approval takes upward of 12 months from application submission to issuing of the instrument. Is that correct?
3. Is CASA aware of the effect these long wait times are having on the industry?
4. What responses have been given to stakeholders who have indicated that these wait times are ‘crippling’ the industry?
5. Has the Minister raised any concerns with CASA regarding long wait times for approvals for RPAS’s?
6. Has the Department raised any concerns with CASA regarding long wait times for approvals for RPAS’s?
7. Is CASA exploring alternative approval models for speeding up approvals for complex operators?
8. Does CASA have the ability to use delegates (industry experts) as additional industry-funded resources to assess applications.
9. What is CASA waiting for to adopt a delegate model?
10. Once an approval is granted, if commercial requirements dictate a change in some details of the instrument, what is the timing to apply these minor changes?
11. How does CASA plan to address this?

**Answer:**

1. The Broad Area BVLOS initiative commenced as a trial on 15 October 2025. The trial will run for 12 months during which the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) will collect data and evidence to guide future BVLOS policy.
2. No. While some highly complex or novel operations may require additional time for detailed safety assessments, the median processing time over the past 3 months was 83 days. Operating within a complex and evolving regulatory environment, CASA remains

committed to improving service delivery. The initiatives outlined in the Strategic Regulatory Roadmap are designed to reduce processing times and enhance efficiency, while maintaining aviation safety. The Roadmap is available on CASA's website: <https://www.casa.gov.au/resources-and-education/publications/corporate-publications/rpas-and-aam-strategic-regulatory-roadmap>.

3. Yes.
4. CASA has engaged extensively with stakeholders through industry forums, working groups, and direct consultations. CASA has communicated its commitment to improving processing times and outlined initiatives such as the RPAS and AAM Strategic Regulatory Roadmap, streamlined approval pathways, and trials like Broad Area BVLOS approvals. These reforms aim to enable scaled growth without compromising safety.
5. We are aware the Minister has concerns about some of the delays.
6. We have had discussions with the Department about some of the challenges and concerns raised by industry.
7. Yes.
8. CASA has the ability under the *Civil Aviation Act 1988* to appoint delegates for certain functions.
9. While a small number of delegates have been appointed, CASA is assessing the feasibility, governance, and safety implications of delegate models, including what would be necessary for appropriate oversight, training, and accountability.
10. The timing depends on the nature of the change. Minor amendments or renewal applications that do not affect the safety case are generally processed more quickly than initial applications. Administrative corrections are typically re-issued within 24 hours. Over the past three months, renewals and variations for simple area approvals averaged 11 days, while renewals and variations for complex BVLOS operations averaged 51 days. Some applications require coordination with other stakeholders, such as Airservices Australia, which can influence overall processing times.
11. Please refer to (1) and (2).