



Australian Association for Unmanned Systems (AAUS)

Submission to

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) for proposed reform to Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and electric Vertical Take-Off and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft noise regulations

October 4, 2021

Background

The Australian Association for Unmanned Systems (AAUS) is pleased to provide a submission in response to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (DITRDC) RIS for proposed reform to Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and eVTOL aircraft noise regulations.

AAUS is Australia's oldest and largest industry advocacy group for drones and the emerging Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) sector. AAUS represents drones across all three domains: air, land and maritime. AAUS' objective is to promote a professional, safe and commercially viable unmanned systems and AAM industry. AAUS achieves this through its industry advocacy and promotion, education and outreach, and networking activities.

AAUS provides a single representative voice for the full breadth of the drone and AAM industry. AAUS' 2,900 members span small-to-large enterprise, manufacturers, licensed and unlicensed operators, training providers, academic institutions, government, and other supporting technical and professional services to the Australian drone industry. Input from our members has been used to prepare this submission.

In this submission the use of the term 'drone' encompasses Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). Although they have similar meanings, Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) is also preferred to Urban Air Mobility (UAM) in the submission. In November 2019, AAUS formed an advisory group to lead the development of an all-of-industry position on noise regulations applicable to the sector. This AAUS advisory group produced an industry

position paper¹ on RPAS Noise Regulations and many of the key positions and considerations developed are included in this submission.

Noise regulations can have a significant impact on the emerging RPAS and AAM sector and the many benefits they deliver to the community. Benefits include those directly through the provision of new services (e.g., aerial imagery, surveying, and delivery) or downstream benefits like those from enhancing public services (e.g., fire and emergency response), enhancing the efficiency and environmental sustainability of existing industries (e.g., infrastructure management and farming), through to the creation of new jobs. These benefits will continue to grow as the industry matures and new applications are realised.

It must also be recognised that the technical and operational restrictions potentially required to be compliant with noise regulations will have a significant impact on the sector and its ability to continue to deliver and grow the benefits it offers the community.

The primary objective of noise regulations must achieve an equitable balance between the **public's right to freedom from unreasonable disruption and the loss of benefit delivered to individuals and the community as a whole as a result of noise regulation.**

We believe that the development of RPAS and AAM Noise regulations should be:

- **Open** – Industry, community and other relevant stakeholders should be part of the process.
- **Objective** – The rationale and basis for any regulation must be disclosed and be directly traceable to the public concern it seeks to manage.
- **Fair** – Not impose unreasonable cost or restriction on an emerging and beneficial industry. Regulations should not establish requirements above and beyond those applicable to other industries or activities.
- **Balanced** – Reflect a balancing of the needs of all stakeholders.
- **Flexible** – Be outcome-based to provide manufacturers, operators and end users flexibility in their approach to meeting requirements.
- **Future proof** – Account for the changing use cases, innovation in technology, growth in industry activity, and changing public and political sentiment.
- **Harmonised** – Regulations and their enforcement should be harmonised across all States and Territories and only one agency should have responsibility.
- **Compatible** – Noise regulations should not conflict with other regulatory requirements on RPAS and AAM. Where there is conflict, safety requirements shall always have precedence.
- **Enforceable** – Regulations should be measurable and enforceable.
- **Living** – Regulations should be periodically reviewed to account for changing social attitudes.
- **Clear** – Regulations should be clear, concise, and effective.

¹ AAUS Submission: <https://aaus.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/AAUS-Industry-Position-Paper-RPAS-Noise-Regulations-Final-20191121.pdf>

Submission Summary

AAUS:

- Agrees that the current regulations are not fit for purpose and that much work is required to develop appropriate regulation to address RPAS and AAM noise.
- Supports the need for an interim solution for noise regulation
- Agrees that consistent regulation by the government will provide more certainty to the growing AAM and RPAS sectors and their contributions to the greater economic, environmental and wellbeing outcomes for Australia.
- Agrees that the **Option 3 (flexible reform) should be the preferred option** of the four policy options described in the RIS. However, the following potential negative impacts in relation to this option should be addressed:
 - The case-by-case approval process coupled with short 12-month approvals may lead to an administering burden that slows approvals and stifles industry.
 - A consistent noise impact standard will be critical to ensure that the processes and regulations are applied consistently and fairly across all applicants and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

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