



Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for the safe, respectful, accountable, and innovative use of drones (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems – RPAS) within the Balonne Shire Council area. This policy aims to ensure drone operations on Council-controlled land are conducted in accordance with relevant legislation, protect community privacy and safety, and support responsible recreational and commercial drone use.

2. SCOPE & AUTHORITY

This policy applies to all drone operations conducted on Council-controlled land, facilities, and infrastructure within the Balonne Shire local government area. It governs both recreational and commercial use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), commonly referred to as drones, by members of the public, contractors, and Council employees.

Excluded from scope are:

- Drone operations on private property not under Council control.
- Maritime, land-based, or underwater autonomous vehicles.
- Aerial passenger or freight drones not operated by Council.

This policy is established under the authority of the *Local Government Act 2009*, Chapter 2, Section 9:

9 Powers of local governments generally

- (1) A local government has the power to do anything that is necessary or convenient for the good rule and local government of its local government area.

Drone operations must also comply with relevant Commonwealth and State legislation, including but not limited to:

- *Civil Aviation Act 1988*
- *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998* (Part 101)
- *Part 101 Manual of Standards 2019*
- *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Public Records Act 2002*
- *Invasion of Privacy Act 1971*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*
- *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
- *Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service*
- *Queensland Procurement Policy 2018*

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Balonne Shire Council supports the safe, respectful, accountable, and innovative use of drones (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems – RPAS) to enhance community services, operational efficiency, and recreational enjoyment. This policy establishes a framework for drone operations on Council-controlled land that aligns with the principles outlined in the Queensland Government Drones Use Policy (QGDUP) and complies with relevant Commonwealth and State legislation.



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Council recognises the growing role of drone technology in infrastructure assessment, environmental monitoring, emergency response, and tourism promotion. To ensure responsible use, all drone operations must demonstrate:

- **Safety:** Compliance with CASA regulations and Council risk management protocols to protect people, property, and the environment.
- **Respect:** Consideration of community privacy, cultural heritage, and public amenity, with transparency in data collection and use.
- **Accountability:** Adherence to ethical standards, public sector obligations, and proper recordkeeping of drone-related activities.
- **Innovation:** Encouragement of new applications, partnerships, and knowledge-sharing to improve service delivery and community outcomes.

Drone use on Council land maybe subject to approval as outlined in Attachment A. Operations must not interfere with emergency operations, critical infrastructure, or public safety. Council reserves the right to impose conditions, restrict access, or revoke permissions where operations are deemed non-compliant or contrary to public interest.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 All Councillors and Council Employees

- Must comply with this policy when operating drones on Council-controlled land.
- Must ensure drone operations are conducted safely, respectfully, and in accordance with relevant legislation and Council procedures and as such, obtain their remote pilot licence (RePL) through CASA.
- Must report any incidents, breaches, or complaints related to drone use to the appropriate authority.

4.2 Managers and Directors

- Are responsible for ensuring staff under their supervision are aware of and comply with this policy.
- Must assess and approve drone operations conducted by Council staff or contractors within their operational areas.
- Must ensure risk assessments, privacy considerations, and data management protocols are in place for any Council-led drone activity.

4.3 Director Infrastructure Services

- Shall be the custodian of this policy.
- Shall implement control measures and training that provide assurance that Council acts in accordance with the policy.
- Shall oversee systems and processes to monitor drone use, assess compliance, and report on operational outcomes.

4.4 Chief Executive Officer

- Shall ensure organisational compliance with this policy.
- Shall authorise commercial / recreational drone use on Council land where required.



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- Shall support innovation and continuous improvement in drone-related service delivery.

5. RISK

This policy seeks to mitigate the following risks associated with drone operations on Council-controlled land:

- **Public Safety Risks:** Unregulated or unsafe drone operations may pose physical hazards to individuals, property, and emergency services.
- **Privacy and Data Risks:** Improper collection, storage, or use of personal information may breach privacy laws and damage community trust.
- **Reputational Risks:** Non-compliance with CASA regulations or Council conditions may result in negative public perception or legal liability.
- **Operational Risks:** Drone interference with Council activities, infrastructure, or contracted services may disrupt service delivery.
- **Legal and Compliance Risks:** Failure to adhere to Commonwealth and State legislation may result in penalties, litigation, or regulatory action.

Council will manage these risks through:

- Clear approval processes for commercial / recreational drone use.
- Alignment with CASA regulations and QGDUP principles.
- Staff training and contractor compliance requirements.
- Privacy impact assessments and data governance protocols.
- Ongoing monitoring and review of drone operations.

6. IMPACTS

- **Corporate Plan:** This policy supports the Balonne Shire Council Corporate Plan by contributing to safe and sustainable communities, enhancing service delivery through innovative technology, and protecting public spaces and infrastructure. It aligns with Council's strategic goals for community wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and digital transformation.
- **Human Rights Compatibility Statement:** Under the Human Rights Act 2019, this policy is compatible with the protection of individual rights, including the right to privacy, safety, and freedom from surveillance. Drone operations governed by this policy will be conducted transparently and with respect for human dignity.
- **Engagement:** Consistent with Council's engagement policy, community feedback regarding drone use in public spaces has informed the development of this policy. Ongoing engagement will be undertaken through signage, public notices, and consultation where drone operations may impact public amenity or community expectations.
- **Climate Variability:** Drone technology supports Council's response to climate variability by enabling efficient environmental monitoring, land and water management, and rapid assessment of climate-related impacts across the region as required in times of natural disaster response/recovery.
- **Sustainability:** Council encourages sustainable drone practices, including the use of low-emission equipment, minimisation of environmental disturbance, and responsible disposal of drone-related materials. Drone operations are expected to align with Council's broader sustainability goals and contribute to long-term ecological resilience.



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7. RELATED LAWS

This policy is informed by and must be implemented in accordance with the following legislation:

- Commonwealth Legislation
 - *Civil Aviation Act 1988*
 - *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 (Part 101)*
 - *Part 101 Manual of Standards 2019*
 - *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*
 - *Privacy Act 1988*
 - *Privacy Regulation 2013*
 - *Radiocommunications Act 1992*
 - *Damage by Aircraft Act 1999*
 - *Air Navigation Act 1920*
- Queensland Legislation
 - *Local Government Act 2009*
 - *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
 - *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011*
 - *Air Navigation Act 1937*
 - *Major Events Act 2014*
 - *Corrective Services Act 2006*
 - *Corrective Services Regulation 2017*
 - *Agricultural Chemicals Distribution Control Act 1966*
 - *Human Rights Act 2019*
 - *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*
 - *Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service*
 - *Information Privacy Act 2009*
 - *Invasion of Privacy Act 1971*
 - *Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)* – particularly section 227A
 - *Public Records Act 2002*
 - *Right to Information Act 2009*
 - *Survey and Mapping Infrastructure Act 2003*
 - *Queensland Procurement Policy 2018*
- Local Laws
 - Balonne Shire Council Local Laws as published at www.balonne.qld.gov.au

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Queensland Government Drones Use Policy (QGDUP)
- Queensland Drones Strategy
- Balonne Shire Council Corporate Plan – www.balonne.qld.gov.au
- Council's Engagement Policy
- Council's Risk Management Framework



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- Council's Procurement Policy
- Council's Work Health and Safety Policy
- Council's Local Laws – www.balonne.qld.gov.au

9. REVISION HISTORY

- **Revokes:** Not applicable.
- **Previous approved versions:** None.
- **Suggested to review by:** October 2027, or earlier if legislative changes, operational needs or community feedback warrant an interim review.

10. DEFINITIONS

Drone / Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS): An unmanned aircraft that is flown remotely or autonomously. This includes multi-rotor systems, fixed-wing craft, single-rotor helicopters, and hybrid configurations.

Council-controlled land: Any land, facility, or infrastructure owned, managed, or maintained by Balonne Shire Council, including parks, reserves, roads, and public buildings.

Commercial drone use: Any drone operation conducted for business, promotional, research, or contracted service purposes, including filming, surveying, or data collection.

Recreational drone use: Drone operation conducted for personal enjoyment or hobby purposes, not involving commercial gain or formal service delivery.

CASA: The Civil Aviation Safety Authority – the Commonwealth regulator responsible for aviation safety, including the oversight of drone operations under Part 101 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998.

Remote Pilot Licence (RePL): A licence issued by CASA that certifies an individual to operate drones commercially under specified conditions.

Remote Operator Certificate (ReOC): A certificate issued by CASA to organisations authorising them to conduct commercial drone operations.

Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA): A formal process used to evaluate the potential privacy risks associated with drone data collection and to identify mitigation strategies.

QGDUP: Queensland Government Drones Use Policy – the overarching policy guiding safe, respectful, accountable, and innovative drone use across Queensland Government agencies.

11. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Operational Guidelines for Drone Use on Council-Controlled Land

Attachment B: Drone Operation Request Form

Attachment C: Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) Form



Attachment A

Operational Guidelines for Drone Use on Council-Controlled Land

1. RECREATIONAL DRONE USE

- **Restricted Areas:**
 - Rowden Park St George is within the flight zone for the St George aerodrome and a restricted area. Operation of drones at Rowden Park is not permitted.
- **Notification:**
 - Recreational users for showground bookings must notify council of their intention to operate a drone and acknowledge they understand the CASA regulations, operators are appropriately qualified, booking organisation has appropriate public liability and operator complies with safety requirements.
 - All other council facilities do not require formal approval but must comply with CASA regulations and Council signage.
- **Conditions of Use:**
 - Only one drone may be operated at a time.
 - Drones must remain within visual line-of-sight.
 - Operations must occur during daylight hours.
 - Drones must not fly within 30 metres of people, buildings or vehicles.
 - Maximum altitude: 120 metres (400 feet).
 - Drones weighing more than 250 grams must be registered with CASA.
 - Operators must complete CASA's online safety accreditation and carry proof of completion when flying.
 - No flying near emergency operations or restricted airspace.
- **Exclusion Zones:**
 - Drone operations are prohibited in designated exclusion zones, including (but not limited to) near aerodromes and helipads, water treatment facilities, cultural heritage sites and wildlife-sensitive areas. A map of exclusion zones is available from Council upon request.
- **Emergency Operations Clause:**
 - Drone operations must cease immediately if they interfere with or are adjacent to emergency services activity.
 - Council may suspend drone use during declared emergencies or disaster response operations.
- **Council Expectations**
 - Respect privacy and public amenity.
 - Avoid flying over playgrounds, events or gatherings.
 - Operators must use signage and wear high-visibility PPE during drone operations.
 - Council-operated drones must display identification markings.

2. COMMERCIAL DRONE USE

- **Approval Required:**
 - All commercial drone operations on Council-controlled land require written approval from Council.
 - Operators seeking to operate within the Shire commercially
- **Application Process:**
 - Submit a Drone Operation Request Form to Council's Infrastructure Department.



Attachment A

- Include a flight plan, risk assessment, and evidence of CASA certification (RePL and ReOC).
- Provide proof of insurance (public liability and professional indemnity).
- **Conditions of Approval:**
 - Operations must align with the approved scope and timeframe.
 - Data collected must remain the intellectual property of Council unless otherwise agreed.
 - Operators must comply with Council's WHS and privacy policies.
 - Drone operations are prohibited in designated exclusion zones (see above).
 - Operators must wear high-visibility PPE during drone operations unless discretion is required (e.g. compliance monitoring).
 - Council-operated drones must display identification markings.
 - Drone operations must cease immediately if they interfere with or are adjacent to emergency services activity.
 - Council may suspend drone use during declared emergencies or disaster response operations.

3. COUNCIL STAFF OPERATIONS

- Council employees operating drones must demonstrate competency aligned with CASA standards.
- Internal training and refresher modules will be provided to ensure safe and compliant operations.

4. PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (PIA)

- Required for any drone operation involving image or audio capture.
- Must assess:
 - Whether personal information may be collected.
 - How data will be stored, secured and used.
 - Whether individuals can be reasonably identified.
- Use Council's PIA template and submit with the approval request.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- Required for all commercial operations and Council-led drone activity.
- Checklist includes:
 - Identification of potential hazards (e.g. proximity to infrastructure public gatherings).
 - Assessment of likelihood and consequence of each risk.
 - Mitigation strategies (e.g. signage, exclusion zones, PPE).

6. SIGNAGE AND COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION

- Use temporary signage to inform the public of drone operations.
- Include purpose, timeframe and contact details.
- For sensitive operations, consider additional engagement (e.g. social media notice, letterbox drop) consistent with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

7. DATA STORAGE AND REDACTION PROTOCOLS

- All drone-captured data must be stored securely in accordance with Council's policies and procedures.
- Personal information must be redacted where possible (e.g. pixelation of faces, number plates).
- Data must be retained and disposed of in accordance with the *Public Records Act 2002*.

8. COMPLAINT HANDLING AND ENFORCEMENT

- Unsafe or non-compliant drone activity should be reported to CASA via their complaint portal.
- Council may investigate complaints relating to drone use on Council-controlled land and take enforcement action where necessary, including revocation of approvals or referral to regulatory authorities.



Attachment B

Drone Operation Request Form

Privacy Notice: Balonne Shire Council is collecting the personal information you supply on this form for the purpose of accessing and managing drone operations on Council-controlled land. The information will only be accessed by authorized Council employees and will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1998 (Cth) and the Information Privacy Act 2009.

Section 1: Personal Details

Applicant Name:	
Organisation (if applicable):	
Phone:	
Email:	

Section 2: Drone Operation Details

Purpose of Drone Operation:	☐ Recreational	☐ Commercial	☐ Council-led
Proposed Location(s):			
Proposed Date(s) and Time(s):			
Drone Model and Weight:			
CASA Accreditation Number:			
RePL / ReOC Number:			

Section 3: Declaration

I declare that the information provided is true and correct, and that I will comply with all relevant legislation and Council policies. I have provided copies of my flight plan, risk assessment, privacy impact assessment (if applicable), proof of CASA certification and proof of insurance with this completed Drone Operation Request Form.	
Name:	
Organisation (if applicable):	
Signature:	
Date:	



Attachment C

Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) Form

Complete this form for any drone operation involving image or audio capture.

Privacy Notice: Balonne Shire Council is collecting the personal information you supply on this form for the purpose of accessing and managing drone operations on Council-controlled land. The information will only be accessed by authorized Council employees and will be handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1998 (Cth) and the Information Privacy Act 2009.

Section 1: Description of Drone Operation

Purpose and Scope:	
Location:	
Duration:	

Section 2: Personal Information Collected

What types of personal information may be captured?	
Can individuals be reasonably identified?	

Section 3: Data Handling

How will data be stored and secured?	
Who will have access to the data?	
How long will the data be retained?	
How will data be disposed of?	



Attachment C

Section 4: Privacy Risks

What are the potential privacy risks?	
What mitigation strategies will be implemented?	

Section 5: Community Notification

How will individuals be informed of the operation?	
Will signage or public notices be used?	

Section 6: Compliance

Does the operation comply with the <i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i> ?	
Are there any other relevant laws or policies?	

Section 7: Declaration

I declare that the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I confirm that the proposed drone operation has been assessed for privacy risks and that appropriate mitigation strategies have been identified. I acknowledge that this assessment will be used by Balonne Shire Council to determine compliance with relevant privacy legislation and Council policies.	
Name:	
Organisation (if applicable):	
Signature:	
Date:	