

## Guidelines for Operating Drones on School Grounds

### Definition

**Drone:** Remotely piloted aircraft.

### Policy

This policy document is based on Department of Education Victoria guidelines for use of drones in schools by staff, students, contractors or volunteers, and how schools are to respond to drone-related security incidents. Refer: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/drones/policy>

### Summary

- Staff and students may use drones, weighing less than 2kg, on school grounds at the discretion of the principal and under the conditions outlined by DET [Operating Drones on School Grounds Guidelines](#)
- Any drone used must comply with the [Civil Aviation Safety Regulations](#).
- The Department encourages schools to consider appropriate materials, shape and size for a drone to minimise injury or potential damage to the school.
- Schools must report any unsafe operations and incidents of people or organisations putting students and staff safety at risk.
- To comply with privacy and data protection, and Department of Education and college [Photographing, Filming and Recording Students Policy](#), consent must be obtained from parents/guardians before collecting or using photographs, film or recordings of students.

### Use of drones by teachers and students

- Drones can be used by teachers and students under the conditions of the relevant CASA regulations and DET policy.
- Teachers and students can only operate drones weighing less than 2kg, operated by visual line of sight in weather conditions that permit unaided visibility, and must always remain within a 1km range of the operator.
- If permission is granted by the principal, school staff must supervise students using the drone.
- The recreational use of a drone by students outside of classroom times is at the discretion of the principal.
- In making their decision, principals should consider if using a drone within school grounds adheres to this policy.
- Written approval request to operate a drone on the school site must be sent to the principal and should provide details of the size of aircraft to be used, evidence of the required pilot licences and operator's certifications, flight plans, insurance coverage and evidence of CASA notification, in accordance with these policy requirements.
- Use of drones must adhere to the Workplace Health and Safety Requirements and minimise risk of injury or damage to school property. For further information, refer to: [OHS Management System \(OHSMS\) Overview](#).

## Guidelines for Operating Drones on School Grounds

### Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA)

Drones used within Victorian government schools must comply with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) Regulations.

#### CASA regulatory requirements

- The weight of a drone determines which CASA regulatory requirements need to be followed.
- Teachers and students can only operate drones weighing less than 2kg.
- Any commercial drone flights must abide by standard operating conditions and adhere to privacy and copyright provisions.
- Part 101 of Civil Aviation Regulations prescribes standard operating conditions for all recreational remotely piloted flight, including drones.
- Anyone flying a drone weighing more than 2kg is required to have a remote pilot licence (RePL) and a drone operator's certificate (ReOC).
- You don't need a RePL or ReOC to fly a drone weighing under 2kg, but commercial operators need to notify CASA of their flight at least five days prior.
- Civil Aviation Safety Regulations Part 101 prescribes standard operating conditions for all recreational remotely piloted flight. Unless otherwise approved, operators can only fly one drone at a time and must adhere to the following conditions:

The drone must be operated:

- by visual line of sight only and in weather conditions that permit unaided visibility, that is, close enough to see, maintain orientation and achieve accurate flight and tracking.
- no higher than 400 ft/120 m above ground level.
- within a range of 1 km from the operator at all times.

The drone must not be operated:

- at night.
- through cloud or fog.
- any closer to than 30 m to vehicles, boats, buildings or people.
- over populous areas, such as beaches, other people's backyards, heavily populated parks, or sports ovals where a game is in progress.
- within 5.5km of an airfield (airfields include helicopter landing sites in locations such as hospitals).
- during emergency situations such as bushfires, floods and traffic accidents, as they may pose a major safety risk to emergency personnel in the air and on the ground.

### Contracting a commercial drone operator

- Principals may engage the services of a commercial drone operator to undertake aerial photography of school buildings and grounds.
- To ensure the safety of students and school property, the Department encourages principals to complete and record the commercial drone operator checks outlined in DET Guidelines.

## Guidelines for Operating Drones on School Grounds

- Members of the public, businesses or other government agencies using a drone for commercial use are not permitted to fly over government school airspace without the explicit approval of the principal.
- All commercial drone flights must abide by standard operating conditions and adhere to privacy and copyright provisions.

### Unidentified drones and dangerous flying

- In an **emergency** where there is an immediate hazard to students or staff, schools must contact Emergency Services on 000.
- Members of the public, businesses or other government agencies using a drone for commercial use are not permitted to fly over government school airspace or to photograph school buildings or grounds without the explicit approval of the principal.
- Any unidentified drone flying over government school airspace may constitute a trespass on Minister's land.
- Schools must report any unsafe drone operations by calling the CASA on 1800 687 342 and the Victorian Police Assistance Line on 131 444.
- Incidents that cause damage to buildings or injury to students can be reported to the Department's Security Service Unit 24/7 Hotline on 03 9589 6266.

### Privacy and intellectual property

- Photographs, video or digital images of a student are considered 'personal information'. Using or disclosing 'personal information' is governed by the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) (PDP Act).
- Schools must obtain consent from parents/guardians before collecting or using student photographs, film, and recordings.
- Refer to the Department's policy on Photographing, Filming and Recording of Students for more information.
- Members of the public, businesses or other government agencies using drones, who have been granted approval to fly over school airspace, are not permitted to photograph or video students.
- Any accidental or incidental images of students must be deleted.
- Copyright of the photographs, sound recordings and video footage taken by a drone is governed by the Copyright Act.

### Insurance

Victorian Managed Insurance Authority insurance policy's definition of aircraft does not include drones. Therefore, the aircraft exclusion does not apply to their use. However, schools have a duty of care to their students and need to ensure that they are taking reasonable steps to prevent reasonably foreseeable harm.

Commercial operators of a drone on Victorian school grounds must have insurance covering their operations. Evidence of insurance coverage should be included in access requests.