

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates 2023 - 2024

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

Committee Question Number: 304

Departmental Question Number: SQ23-005058

Division/Agency Name: Agency - Civil Aviation Safety Authority

Hansard Reference: Written (02 November 2023)

Topic: CASA - Drone incidents at airports

Senator Bridget McKenzie asked:

1. What are the dangers involved in flying drones within 5.5km of a controlled airport?
2. How many incidents have been reported involving the flying drones within 5.5km of a controlled airport in 22/23?
 - a) How does this compare to previous year?
3. How many incidents have pilots reported involving drones in 22/23?
 - a) How does this compare to previous year?
4. How many incidents have been investigated and how many of those involved further action taken by CASA in 22/23 and how does this compare to previous years?
5. What is your view of the following drone actions combined in one incident:
 - a) Flying within 5.5km of a controlled airport
 - b) Flying in a No Fly Zone as listed by OpenSkies.
 - c) Flying directly over people not maintaining a 30m horizontal distance
 - d) Flying at Night or reduce visibility
 - e) Possibly Flying over 120m

Answer:

1. The primary safety risk of drones flying within 5.5km of a controlled airport is an increased risk of collision with a conventionally piloted aircraft.
2. Data provided to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) from the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) and Airservices Australia indicates there were 49 pilot-reported incidents relating to the operation of drones within 5.5km of a controlled airport in FY22/23.
 - a. Data provided to CASA from the ATSB and Airservices Australia indicates there were 27 pilot-reported incidents relating to the operation of drones within 5.5km of a controlled airport in FY21/22.
3. Please see part 2 above of this question.

4. In FY22/23, 54 incidents relating to alleged safety breaches involving drones were considered for investigation. These incidents were nation-wide and not limited just to operations within 5.5km of a controlled airport.

The following table sets out the number of drone-related matters referred for CASA investigation, along with outcomes by financial year. In some cases, more than one enforcement outcome may apply to a matter.

OFFICIAL Financial year	Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) Cases	Counselling letter	Aviation Infringement Notice (AIN)	Referred for prosecution
2018/2019	96	64	55	7
2019/2020	73	70	50	8
2020/2021	59	39	27	3
2021/2022	62	36	18	0
2022/2023	54	28	13	0
Total	344	237	163	18

5. With the exception of a drone weighing no more than 250 grams flying near a controlled airport (consistent with the Part 101 Manual of Standards), the identified individual drone actions (listed in the question) would be a breach of CASA regulation unless the operator has approval from CASA. CASA does not have a view on the combined impact of the identified drone actions.