Australian Airspace Policy Statement 2025[1]

Airspace Act 2007

I, CATHERINE KING, Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, make this Statement under section 8 of the *Airspace Act 2007*.

Dated [DATE] [MONTH] 2025

CATHERINE KING
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government

1 Name of Statement

This Statement is the *Australian Airspace Policy Statement 2025*.

2 Commencement

This Statement commences on [DATE] [MONTH] 2025.

Note

1. All legislative instruments and compilations are registered on the Federal Register of Legislation (FRL) kept under the *Legislation Act 2003.* See https://www.legislation.gov.au/

Australian Airspace Policy Statement

Name of Instrument

1. This instrument is the Australian Airspace Policy Statement (AAPS) 2025.

Commencement

2. This version of the AAPS commences on [DATE] [MONTH] 2025 and repeals the previous AAPS, which commenced on 24 November 2021.

Definitions and Reference Documents

3. Expressions used in the AAPS are defined in the Glossary of Terms. Documents referenced in the AAPS, and details on how to access them, are listed at the end of the AAPS.

Purpose

4. The AAPS is made pursuant to Part 2 of the *Airspace Act 2007*. The AAPS provides the Commonwealth Government's airspace policy objectives and priorities to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and provides guidance to the aviation industry and other aviation agencies. CASA must administer airspace, as a national resource, consistent with its legislative functions, government policy objectives and priorities, and Australia's obligations under the Chicago Convention.

Function and powers in connection to Australian-administered airspace

5. The legislation and regulations which govern airspace administration require a broad range of activities to be undertaken by CASA. CASA will exercise its airspace regulatory functions through the Office of Airspace Regulation (OAR) and other parts of CASA as necessary, in line with the *Civil Aviation Act 1988* and the *Airspace Act 2007*.

6. The legislation and regulations which govern airspace administration enable CASA to:
   - determine the class of airspace and controlled aerodromes in Australia;
   - designate prohibited, restricted and danger areas;
   - designate flying training areas;
   - designate air routes and airways;
   - provide directions relating to air routes, airways and facilities;
   - publish the particulars of air traffic services; and
   - review the Instruments containing declarations, designations, determinations and directions at least every 5 years.

7. Airservices Australia (Airservices) is expected to manage the airspace and provide services in a manner consistent with CASA's administrative direction, as well as government policy objectives and priorities, Airservices' legislative functions and Australia's obligations under the Chicago Convention.

8. Consistent with the government's policy of a harmonised national civil and military air traffic management (ATM) system, better coordination of national civil and military

airspace requirements will be facilitated by the placement of Department of Defence (Defence) officers within the OAR, holding delegated powers under the Airspace Regulations 2007.

Government Policy Objectives

Safety

9. Australia's aviation safety system plays a vital role in ensuring a safe, efficient and competitive aviation industry. Safety of air navigation is an integral part of airspace administration. The Government expects that CASA will identify and monitor airspace risk, and respond appropriately and in a timely manner to any change in risk levels for air navigation to ensure safety outcomes for all aviation participants, including through collaboration with industry and other government entities.

Future Airspace Framework

10. CASA will develop an Australian Future Airspace Framework (AFAF) that will reflect the Government's airspace policy objectives and the Airspace Strategy detailed in paragraphs 35 to 44. It will include a long-term strategic airspace plan to support the implementation of the AFAF. The AFAF will establish an evidence and risk-based approach when assessing airspace, supported by robust collision risk modelling, data and the application of risk mitigation options to ensure Australian airspace architecture is safe for all airspace users.

Regulatory Certainty for New Aviation Technologies

11. CASA will work with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department), and other aviation agencies to safely and efficiently integrate Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) into Australian airspace to enable the continued growth of the sector. This will be achieved by implementing fit-for-purpose regulations and regulatory pathways informed through proportionate risk profiles, development of guidance material, and digital transformation of regulatory application services.

Enabling Flight Testing

12. The Government expects that CASA will work collaboratively with the Department, Airservices, Defence and industry to enable and facilitate safe flight testing of new civil and military systems and capabilities within Australian-administered airspace and at appropriate aerodromes. This will support the advancement of Australia's military strategic objectives and sovereign manufacturing, without compromising aviation safety.

Airspace Review

13. The Government expects that CASA will continue to undertake regular reviews of Australia's airspace architecture, services, facilities and airspace user obligations. CASA will also consider proven international best practice airspace systems with a view to deliver safe, efficient and appropriate airspace arrangements. Such reviews should be considered for incorporation into the AFAF.

International Consistency

14. The Government expects that CASA will continue to move closer to alignment with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and recommended practices (SARPs), and that Australia's airspace administration will remain consistent

with the objectives and priorities identified in the ICAO Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP) and ICAO Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP).

Regional Aerodromes

15. The Government is committed to ensuring that appropriate levels of airspace classification and air traffic services are implemented to enable the continued safe operation of services at regional aerodromes. Airspace classification and services at regional aerodromes should provide an acceptable level of safety for all airspace users informed by the outcomes of airspace reviews.

Future Focused Collaboration to Support National Security

16. The Government expects that CASA, the Department, Airservices, the Department of Home Affairs, and Defence will work collaboratively to ensure national security requirements are considered when administering airspace, without compromising aviation safety. Consideration should be given to how action required to preserve Australia's sovereignty can be integrated with civil aviation, noting the potential associated constraints on the efficient use of, and equitable access to, airspace for all users. Decision making should recognise both the links and differences between national security and safety.

Airspace Administration

17. The administration of Australian-administered airspace shall give priority to the safety of air navigation. In addition, application of this AAPS shall:
    - be in Australia's national interest, consistent with broader government policy;
    - take into account national security requirements;
    - consider the current and future needs of the Australian aviation industry, which includes civil aviation and military capabilities, and crewed and uncrewed aircraft;
    - consider cost implications for all airspace users;
    - consider adopting elements of international airspace systems adapted to benefit Australia's aviation;
    - as far as is practicable, ensure the environment is protected from the effects of the operation and use of aircraft;
    - consider flexible use airspace wherever practicable; and
    - take advantage of advances in technology wherever practicable.

Airspace Classification used in Australian-administered Airspace

18. Airspace administration in Australia is generally aligned with the ICAO prescribed airspace classes and associated levels of service as set out in Annex 11 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation (1944) (Chicago Convention). Differences to the ICAO classes of airspace in Australia are notified to ICAO and listed in the Australian Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP).

19. The airspace classification system to be used in Australia is specified below:

Class A: Instrument flight rules (IFR) flights only are permitted; all flights are provided with an Air Traffic Control (ATC) service and are separated from each other.

Class B: IFR and visual flight rules (VFR) flights are permitted, all flights are provided with ATC service and are separated from each other.

Class C: IFR and VFR flights are permitted, all flights are provided with ATC service and IFR flights are separated from other IFR flights and from VFR flights. VFR flights are separated from IFR flights and receive traffic information in respect of other VFR flights.

Class D: IFR and VFR flights are permitted, and all flights are provided with an ATC service. IFR flights are separated from other IFR flights and receive traffic information in respect of VFR flights, VFR flights receive traffic information in respect of all other flights.

Class E: IFR and VFR flights are permitted, IFR flights are provided with an ATC service and are separated from other IFR flights. All flights receive traffic information as far as is practicable. Class E shall not be used for control zones.

Class F: IFR and VFR flights are permitted, all participating IFR flights receive an air traffic advisory service, and all flights receive a flight information service if requested.

Class G: IFR and VFR flights are permitted and receive a flight information service if requested.

Note: North of 65°S IFR flights are considered to have an ongoing flight information request and receive traffic information on other IFR flights and known VFR flights.

Special Use Airspace

20. Australia has adopted the ICAO designations described in Annex 11 of the Chicago Convention for describing the designation to be used for the purposes of restricting access to or warning about access to airspace where there are activities that may be incompatible with routine flying operations.

21. The designations to be used in Australia shall be in accordance with the principles of the Chicago Convention and are specified below:

    Prohibited Area: An airspace of defined dimensions, above the land areas or territorial waters of Australia, within which the flight of aircraft is prohibited.

    Restricted Area: An airspace of defined dimensions, above the land areas or territorial waters of Australia, within which the flight of aircraft is restricted in accordance with certain specified conditions.

    Danger Area: An airspace of defined dimensions within which activities dangerous to the flight of aircraft may exist at specified times. CASA may specify different subsets of Danger Areas, such as Military Operating Areas, and, where permissible, place conditions on the use of those Danger Areas.

22. Consistent with ICAO Procedures for Air Navigation Services – Aeronautical Information Management, CASA may publish airspace of defined dimensions where military training or exercises take place at regular intervals. CASA may also establish procedures to permit relevant airspace users to have safe access to such airspace in consultation with the controlling authority.

23. Consistent with ICAO Annex 11, flexible use airspace, and in order to provide added airspace capacity and to improve efficiency and flexibility of aircraft operations, airspace of defined dimensions may be reserved for military or other special activities.

24. The Government acknowledges that CASA may need to publish airspace of defined dimensions to ensure the safety of future airspace users and expects CASA to review the need for airspace changes consistent with government policy objectives.

Review and Change of Airspace Classifications, Services and Facilities

25. CASA's review process must be risk and evidence-based, using both quantitative and qualitative data sources. CASA's risk management framework should be in accordance with ICAO guidance and SARPs. The risk methodology should include all current and future airspace users.

26. CASA will monitor changes to aircraft and passenger movement data on an ongoing basis. The sources for this data will include, but not be limited to the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics, Airservices and aerodrome operators. CASA will review Australian Transport Safety Bureau and Airservices safety occurrence data on an ongoing basis. CASA will assess all available data to identify current or emerging aviation safety risks that may require airspace solutions or other mitigation to achieve an acceptable level of safety for all airspace users.

27. An airspace risk assessment should be informed by traffic types, complexity and density; the wider operating environment; present and emerging airspace risks; public, industry and government agency comments; government policy objectives; and planned future activity. It should also consider the effectiveness of any risk controls already in place or planned for the volume of airspace.

28. CASA will use the outcomes of the airspace risk assessment and any other sources of information and intelligence as appropriate, to identify any residual airspace risk requiring further analysis and examination within an aeronautical risk review.

29. If CASA has completed a review of airspace risks in the previous year then it may choose to update that existing review if circumstances or new information indicate that a further review is warranted.

30. CASA shall publish its findings and proposals, as required, on the overall safety and suitability of a particular airspace classification, designation or level of service or facilities. These findings may include proposals to: (a) change the classification or designation of airspace; (b) not change a classification or designation, but make other proposals to improve or enhance airspace arrangements, including level of service or facilities, or conditions placed on airspace users; or (c) recommend a continuation of current airspace arrangements without additional controls. CASA will provide these findings and/or proposals to Airservices, Defence and the public for comment and, after considering these comments, make a determination to be implemented by the relevant parties, should such action be required.

31. Any determination must be taken in consultation with Airservices, and Defence where relevant, given the responsibilities of these agencies for the introduction of new or changed air traffic services and facilities arising from such CASA determinations.

32. Following a decision to change the classification of a volume of airspace, services or facilities required, CASA must progress the change in accordance with its published procedures. That change must be formalised as a legislative instrument, endorsed by the relevant delegate, and published on the Federal Register of Legislation and then through the Australian AIP.

33. Following a decision to change the classification of a volume of airspace, services, or facilities by CASA, Airservices shall work collaboratively with CASA to bring effect to that decision in a reasonable timeframe acceptable to CASA.

34. There may be times when urgent decisions are required to meet a safety, national security, or other imperatives, in accordance with the Airspace Regulations, and it may not be practicable to comply with parts of this process.

Australia's Future Airspace Framework

35. In line with the *Airspace Act 2007*, the Airspace Regulations 2007 and consistent with government policy objectives and the Minister's Statement of Expectations, CASA shall develop the AFAF. The AFAF will include a long-term strategic airspace plan to support implementation.

36. CASA shall work collaboratively with Airservices, Defence and the Department to develop the AFAF. CASA shall also consult with industry stakeholders and other government agencies to ensure that the needs of all airspace users and service providers are properly considered in the development and maintenance of the AFAF.

37. The AFAF will be risk-based, leveraging CASA's Airspace Risk Modelling System (ARMS), to inform evidence-based decision making, supported by robust data analysis and the results of the consultation process, in determining Australia's future airspace needs.

38. CASA shall leverage, where practicable, digital transformation of regulatory application and assessment processes to improve the collection of data for evidence-based decision making, and continue to provide cost effective regulatory services in the face of growing application volumes.

39. The AFAF should support the implementation of advanced ATM and uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) traffic management (UTM) technology solutions consistent with government policy directions, and should take into account new technology that may be applied to achieve favourable safety outcomes and broader government policy.

40. The AFAF will contain the design principles for airspace architecture, but will not pre-determine the adoption of a particular classification of airspace. The determination of the classification of airspace should reflect the most appropriate safety and efficiency outcome, as determined by CASA, after completion of a review and having regard to the AFAF, national security requirements and the government's policy objectives.

41. ICAO SARPs also provide an important basis for airspace administration. The Government requires any deviations from ICAO SARPs to be well justified, documented, and formally notified to ICAO as a difference.

42. The long-term strategic airspace plan is to be proactive and consistent with the review requirements of the *Airspace Act 2007* and Airspace Regulations 2007. The plan will also provide transparency to the aviation industry, to allow clear insight into the way in which airspace administrative decisions will be determined and implemented, including through industry consultation.

43. The long-term strategic airspace plan will require ongoing review based on the identification of risks to aviation safety using both quantitative and qualitative analysis, and ultimately the safety judgment of CASA as the airspace regulator.

44. CASA shall ensure that the AFAF and any associated guidance material are maintained and available to a proponent of an airspace change.

Reporting Obligations under the AAPS

45. CASA will provide advice on the major initiatives and priorities of the OAR in its corporate plan including those covering the government's policy objectives outlined in Paragraphs 9 to 16.

46. CASA will publish, and consult on, a Strategic Workplan for the OAR, at least annually, outlining key initiatives and timelines for anticipated reviews and other relevant activities.

47. CASA will include a report on the progress of delivery of all priorities and initiatives under the AAPS as part of broader quarterly reporting to the Minister.

48. CASA will report to the Minister bi-annually on all locations where the residual airspace risk requires further analysis and examination, including the outcome of completed airspace risk reviews.

49. CASA will advise the Minister if it becomes known that the government's policy objectives outlined in Paragraphs 9 to 16 will not be met during the period of 3 years after this statement was made.

Glossary of Terms

AAM	Advanced Air Mobility – Describes an ecosystem of new air transportation technologies for passengers and freight. AAM is a collection of new and emerging aviation ecosystems and technologies, including new aircraft types, various renewable energy systems, distributed propulsion, varying levels of automation and equipage, and various take-off and landing capabilities.
AAPS	Australian Airspace Policy Statement – Instrument that provides guidance on the administration of Australian airspace.
AFAF	Australian Future Airspace Framework – A concept for the future design of airspace architecture and solutions in Australian-administered airspace.
AIP	Aeronautical Information Publication – Published by Airservices, containing aeronautical information of a lasting character essential to air navigation.
Airservices	Airservices Australia – Australia's civilian air navigation service provider.
ARMS	Airspace Risk Modelling System – CASA's tool for quantitative airspace risk analysis.
ATC	Air Traffic Control – Service provided by ground-based controllers to maintain a safe distance between aircraft and obstacles, within a confined airspace and on the airport surface.
ATM	Air Traffic Management – Includes ATC, airspace management and air traffic flow management.
Australian-administered airspace	Australian-administered airspace, for this statement, means: - the airspace over Australian territory; and - airspace that has been allocated by ICAO under the Chicago Convention and for which Australia has accepted responsibility.
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority – Australia's civil aviation safety regulator.
Chicago Convention	*Convention on International Civil Aviation (1944)*.
Defence	Department of Defence – Australian Defence Force airspace interests are not limited to the Royal Australian Air Force but Defence airspace interests are usually represented by the Chief of Air Force.
Environment protection	Meaning, as far as practicable, that airspace should be administered in a manner that accords with section 3A of the *Airspace Act* 2007 and section 9A of the *Civil Aviation Act 1988*.
FRL	Federal Register of Legislation – An electronic repository and authoritative source of Commonwealth legislative instruments, explanatory statements and compilations.
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization – United Nations agency which oversees international air navigation.
IFR	Instrument Flight Rules – A set of flight rules that assume the visibility conditions are such that instruments must be used to assist with flying.
OAR	Office of Airspace Regulation – Operational unit within CASA that regulates and administers airspace.
RPAS	Remotely piloted aircraft system - A remotely piloted aircraft, its associated remote pilot station(s), the required command and control links and any other components as specified in the type design.
SARPs	Standards and Recommended Practices (ICAO).
UAS	Uncrewed Aircraft Systems – An uncrewed aircraft and its associated elements which are operated with no pilot on board.

UTM	Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) Traffic Management – Refers collectively to the policies, rules, regulations, systems, information, standards, and other elements involved in managing and coordinating drone operations.
VFR	Visual Flight Rules – A set of flight rules that assume visibility is good enough to fly with visual reference to the ground.

Referenced Documents

This section provides information on the documents referred to in the AAPS and information on how to access the documents.

Convention on International Civil Aviation

Australia ratified the Convention on International Aviation (1944) (the Chicago Convention) in 1947. The authorised text can be accessed in a number of ways:

- The Chicago Convention is incorporated as Schedule 1 to the *Air Navigation Act 1920* – https://www.legislation.gov.au/C1920A00050
- The Chicago Convention can be downloaded from the ICAO website – http://www.icao.int/publications/Pages/doc7300.aspx

Article 37 of the Chicago Convention empowers ICAO to adopt Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) in relation to a range of aviation safety issues and other matters concerned with the safety, regularity, and efficiency of air navigation as may from time to time appear appropriate.

The SARPs are promulgated by ICAO in Annexes to the Chicago Convention. Article 38 requires Contracting States that do not comply with the SARPs to notify a difference to ICAO. Articles 37 and 38 can be viewed at the links above.

Annexes to the Chicago Convention and Procedures for Air Navigation Services

An overview of the Annexes to the Chicago Convention is available here – http://www.icao.int/safety/airnavigation/NationalityMarks/annexes_booklet_en.pdf

Copies of the Annexes to the Chicago Convention can be obtained:

- from the ICAO website – https://store.icao.int/en/annexes; or
- from most public libraries.

Federal Register of Legislation

Commonwealth Acts and legislative instruments are registered on the Federal Register of Legislation https://www.legislation.gov.au/

- ***Airspace Act 2007***

  https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2007A00038

- **Airspace Regulations 2007**

  https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2007L01835

- ***Civil Aviation Act 1988***

  https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A03656

Aeronautical Information Publication (AIP)

The Australian AIP, and related documents, is available by subscription from Airservices Australia – http://www.airservicesaustralia.com/aip/aip.asp?pg=10