

Additional Information – Drone Noise

September 2024

1. How does the drone noise framework work?

- In Australia, all remotely piloted aircraft and drones must abide by the *Air Navigation (Aircraft Noise) Regulations 2018* (the Noise Regulations). The purpose of the Noise Regulations is to provide a targeted and risk-based approach to managing noise disruptions caused by drones in the community.
- The majority of drone operators are exempt from the noise regulations due to low risk of impact on the community. Drone operators are exempt if they:
 - Are flying for fun or recreation
 - Are flying for a commercial purpose in the 'Excluded RPA' category (please see CASA's Plain English Guide for Micro and Excluded RPA operations for more information)
 - only fly drones that weigh 250 grams or less
 - only fly drones under CASA's drone safety rules (visit CASA's website)
 - only fly drones for one or more of the following purposes:
 - Agricultural operations
 - Environmental operations
 - Fire-fighting, medical, emergency or policing purposes
- Other Commercial drone operators may need a noise approval under the Noise Regulations to fly.
- Applications for an approval under the Noise Regulations can be made using completing a form on the drone.gov.au webpage. The form uses a guided self-assessment process to determine the risk of the operator having significant noise impacts. Operators assessed to have a low impact are granted an automated approval.
- If your operations are considered to pose a high risk of causing significant noise impacts, the department will conduct a full assessment and may place conditions on the drone operation to mitigate noise impacts.
- As part of the approval, the department may impose reporting requirements to help monitor noise impacts. This may include:
 - Aircraft movements (e.g. how many flights were undertaken in a calendar month);
 - Community feedback and noise complaint management;
 - Engagement with local authorities.

2. What are you doing to protect community wellbeing from noisy drones?

The Noise Regulations provide a targeted and risk-based approach to managing noise disruptions caused by commercial drones in the community.

- All remotely piloted aircraft and drones operated for commercial purposes must abide by the Noise Regulations.

While recreational drone users do not need to apply for noise approvals, following the safety regulations for recreational users is expected to minimise noise concerns.

There are multiple options for individuals who have a community concern about drones, they can contact the Department via Drones.gov.au or for safety issues contact the [Civil Aviation Safety Authority](https://www.casa.gov.au/civil-aviation-safety-authority). The local police are responsible for concerns around intrusion of privacy or trespassing.

3. Wing's Bonython trial

Wing commenced a year-long trial of drone deliveries in the ACT suburb of Bonython in 2018. In response to community feedback, the department imposed operational limits on Wing's services, including a maximum number of deliveries per suburb, per day.

After the Bonython trial, Wing moved its operations to Mitchell in the ACT and implemented a range of modifications to their aircraft and operations to reduce noise impacts.

Due to reduced noise impacts, the department removed the cap on flight numbers in 2020 and Wing has continued to operate in Queensland and the ACT with minimal complaints.

More recently, Wing closed its delivery operations in ACT s47G(1)(a)

4. Wing's Victorian operations

Wing recently commenced services in Victoria. The department has received a total of 8 complaints in relation to these services. The department will continue to monitor feedback from these operations and may apply additional conditions to Wing's noise approval if necessary to address community concerns.

5. Wing's Drone operations

The department imposes a number of conditions for Wing's drone operations, including (but not limited to):

- Documenting and reporting quarterly to the department on the feedback that it has received.
- Providing any off-cycle reports and/or feedback, as requested, to the department.
- Operating only during daylight hours at prescribed times.

All complaints received by the department are registered and are reviewed to identify any trends. If there is sufficient evidence of increasing community noise impacts, the department can at any time vary the approval and impose additional operational restrictions to Wing's drone delivery operations.

Noise Complaints about Wing operations

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
ACT	5	3	18	1	1	28
QLD	-	35	23	4	-	62
VIC	-	-	-	-	8	8
TOTAL	5	38	41	5	9	98

This table combines complaints reported directly to the Minister, the Department, Wing and local councils.

Other drone operators whose operations required a full assessment have not reported any drone noise complaints to the department.

6. Other drone noise complaints

The department also receives noise complaints about general drone noise.

General (non-Wing) noise complaints received

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	TOTAL
TOTAL	-	-	7	2	3	12

General noise complaints are difficult to respond to.

- The operator has to be identifiable, which is often not easy to do.
- Further, if the person is operating their drone for recreational purposes, they are not subject to the Air Navigation (Aircraft Noise) Regulations and the department is unable to take action against the operator.