

## Submission 6 – Richard Sutherland

A biased document that fosters negative sentiment towards 'drones'

## Submission on: Don't pry when you fly: Privacy considerations for drone use - Aug 2023

Let's start with the title. Instead of a neutral title, the Dept of Infrastructure has gone with "Don't pry when you fly". While I realise someone thought they were being really clever rhyming 'pry' with 'fly', it sets the tone and bias of this Guideline from the start.

The vast majority of people flying 'drones' have zero interest in invading people's privacy. The perception of privacy issues arises largely from ignorance, media hysteria, and agencies using titles like "Don't pry when you fly". How about changing the title to "Don't be a paranoid 'Karen' if you see a drone".

**Page 7** *"At this stage the Guidelines only relate to drone operations. Other recording devices such as dash cameras, or in-vehicle devices, are not captured in this document."*

Why not? People's images are captured with smartphones (perhaps using long selfie sticks), video door bells, dash cams, security cams etc to a much greater extent than they are by 'drones'. Singling out drones as THE technology for spying just fosters negative perception.

**Page 8** *"unlawful listening to or recording of private conversations,"* Most hobbyist 'drones' do not have microphones, and those that do just pick up prop noise. Suggesting that all drones are capable of recording private conversations, without the person hearing, or being aware of the drone is ridiculous, and further adds to negative sentiment towards 'drones'..

**Page 9** *"Could you see the activity without using a drone?"*

A high end consumer camera can photograph an identifiable face at over 1.2km, a 1.5m selfie stick can look over walls and fences. So if the activity is within 1.2km of a overlooking hill or high rise building, or behind a <3.5m wall, then it's Ok to film with a 'drone'?

**DPP 1** *"Where possible, operate the drone in an area where people impacted can see who is responsible for flying it, while ensuring compliance with CASA's drone safety rules."*

Again, the wording *"impacted"*. In this situation, no one is being impacted, at best their paranoia is being displayed. *"Can see who is responsible for flying it"* Again the bias, what about the privacy of the 'drone' operator? There are numerous accounts of flyers being hassled by angry 'Karens'. The Guideline should instead advise 'Karens' to not approach pilots - especially while they are flying.

**Additional Principle:** Following 911, campaigns such as "Be Alert But Not Alarmed" encouraged people to support suspicious behaviour. There are numerous accounts of flyers being hassled by angry people. I suggest the addition of the following principle:

**Principle 7 - Is an approach by a person reasonable?** If you are approached by an individual who is upset that you may have photographed their backyard, you should ask yourself - Is this just typical 'Karen' behaviour? or is something more sinister going on? A really irate individual could indicate illegal activity in the individual's backyard. (e.g. IEDs,

a meth lab, marijuana crop, child abuse, burying bodies etc). If your suspicions are raised, you can report to:

National Security Hotline on 1800 123 400 or  
Crime Stoppers: <https://crimestoppers.com.au/>

**Case study 1:** A high end consumer camera can photograph an identifiable face at over 1.2km, a 1.5m selfie stick on a smartphone can look over 3.5m walls and fences. So if the activity is within 1,2km of an overlooking hill or high rise building, or behind a <3.5m wall it's Ok?

*"The potential for drones to breach a person's privacy or record personal information, even inadvertently, is significant"* No it is not, the potential for recreational 'drones' to capture private information is low. This sort of wording just triggers 'Karens'.

**Case study 2:** Since CASA has lumped fixed wing model aircraft into its definition of 'drone', the document should make it absolutely clear that the majority of fixed wing model aircraft do not have cameras, and the majority of hobbyist built drones have only low resolution video cameras which are not capable of taking identifiable images at 30m. Most do not have onboard recording of video or sound. Below is an image taken with a digital video camera held at a distance of 3.5m. Note - Common analogue cameras used on cheaper 'drones' have even less resolution.



This is at 3.5m, and not the minimum 30m separation distance for flying 'drones'. The face is not identifiable, even if enlarged:



**Case study 3:** This case example reads as a glowing defence of drone delivery operations, and makes assumptions of what equipment delivery drones are or may be fitted with in the future.

**Case Study 4:** *“I think I have been recorded by a drone whilst at a **public park**, what can I do to prevent my information from being used?”*

In contrast to the other case studies, this particular case study is bordered in RED. The question and response seem to serve one purpose, and that is to foster negative sentiment towards ‘drones’ and to trigger ‘Karens’. Consider the implications of suggesting people confront others with smartphone in a public park. Why do you think ‘drones’ should be treated differently?

## **Conclusion**

The title, tone and content of the Guideline suggests that all ‘drone’ operators are trying to spy. It ignores the MUCH greater privacy concerns enabled by smartphones, video door bells, security cameras, dash cams etc, and instead of trying to correct the perception and alleviate concern by explaining the real limitations of recreational ‘drones’, it further fosters negative sentiment, and will be especially triggering to ‘Karens’.