

## Submission 8 – Swoop Aero



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**Subject: Don't pry when you fly: Privacy considerations for drone use (Guidelines) -  
Swoop Aero submission**

To whom it may concern,

Swoop Aero welcomes the chance to provide feedback on the consultation "Don't pry when you fly: Privacy considerations for drone use (Guidelines)" (the Privacy Guidelines), and thanks the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRCA) for seeking input from the community.

As we operate both internationally and within Australia, we are committed to providing feedback, suggestions and recommendations to assist with the continuous evolution and improvement of the drone regulatory ecosystem, incorporating significant operational experience.

We note the changes that have been made to the first draft. Overall, we support the Privacy Guidelines with some reserves and comments.

Please see our submission attached to this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Kind Regards,

Marion Hiriart  
Aviation Strategy and Government Relations Manager  
Swoop Aero



# Don't pry when you fly: Privacy considerations for drone use (Guidelines) - Swoop Aero's submission

Swoop Aero views the development of recommendations to enhance the Australian drone regulatory ecosystem and enable continued integration of drones into Australian airspace as both timely and necessary.

As a drone operator with extensive experience, we value the importance of privacy and its safeguarding. For this reason, we support the approach of the DITRDCA, but we also believe that it is crucial to strike a balance between ensuring privacy compliance and fostering innovation in the drone sector.

Privacy must be respected and protected in our rapidly evolving technological landscape. Drones, being a transformative technology, have the potential to impact personal privacy in various ways. Ensuring that personal privacy is upheld helps prevent unwarranted surveillance and the misuse of sensitive data and personal information. Establishing guidelines that protect individuals' identities and activities, especially in public spaces, is essential.

We recognise that appropriate privacy guidelines on drone use can help mitigate risks of misuse and prevent potential harm. It might also assist the industry in building public trust and acceptance while promoting responsible innovation by demonstrating a commitment to addressing valid privacy concerns.

While recognising the importance of privacy, it is equally vital to understand that overly strict guidelines and requirements can stifle innovation in the drone industry. The following key points highlight the need to strike a balance between privacy and innovation:

- **Technological Advancements:** the drone industry is constantly evolving, leading to advancements in aerial surveillance, delivery services, environmental monitoring, and more. Restrictive guidelines may impede the development of innovative solutions with the potential to benefit society. The drone industry has incredibly quickly developed and integrated effective privacy features like geofencing and data encryption. These measures can be tailored to the context of specific operations, mitigating privacy risks without compromising functionality. This needs to be recognised and considered further, especially for commercial applications.
- **Operational Flexibility:**
  - Different drone applications require varying operational and functional requirements. A one-size-fits-all approach might hinder the flexibility needed for diverse use cases, including search and rescue, disaster response, medical delivery, and infrastructure inspection. The success and efficacy of these applications often depend on the flexibility to tailor drone



operations to specific needs. A rigid privacy framework could limit the ability to customize drone flights for specific purposes, hampering their efficacy in critical situations.

- Flexibility permits drones to collect precise data for specific objectives. Stringent guidelines might impede the acquisition of valuable insights, hindering scientific research, environmental monitoring, and infrastructure assessment.
  
- **Global Competitiveness:** International drone markets are growing, and countries with balanced regulatory frameworks are better positioned to lead in this field. It has been shown several times across various industries that burdensome and disproportionate privacy requirements could considerably slow down industry development. It is important to strike the right balance that encourages innovation while maintaining a competitive edge.
  
- **Encouraging Responsible Practices:** The Privacy Guidelines should encourage responsible practices through education, training, and fostering a culture of ethical drone use. This approach can lead to a harmonious coexistence between technological progress and individual privacy.
  
- **Improve social licence and ensure public education:** It is important to ensure continuous communication with the public on drone use and privacy to clarify what can and cannot be done (e.g. what constitutes a breach, what is allowed, etc.). There is still a lot of misunderstanding on privacy and drone use across the board. We, as a commercial operator, are already spending a significant amount of time working on raising public awareness and improving social licence through our operations - Government support is needed to prevent miscommunication and ensure education.

In conclusion, the consultation paper underscores the critical need to find a delicate equilibrium between preserving privacy and nurturing innovation. History has shown that overly stringent privacy rules and guidelines can inadvertently stifle the growth of promising industries. The careful navigation of this balance is imperative to ensure that the drone sector thrives while respecting individual rights.