

15 December 2016

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

Re: Submission to inquiry into the regulatory requirements that impact on the safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Unmanned Aerial Systems and associated systems.

As a group representing a multinational company, a small Australian business, a national association of farmers groups and two large Australian businesses, we welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry on Regulatory requirements that impact on the safe use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS), Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and associated systems. This is an important process and each of our organisations has dedicated time and resources into answering some of the critical issues posed in the terms of reference, as you will see in our individual submissions to the Committee.

We recognise and acknowledge the safety implications with RPAS operation in Australia. With an estimated 50,000 (and growing) RPAS in operation across the country, a sensible regulatory regime is required to ensure the safe use of RPAS. At the same time, however, we want to be sure that as with any new technology, regulations do not stifle the innovation of these products given the many solutions that we feel sure they will bring to Australian society.

We have worked very closely and collaboratively with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) in trialling our products for various conditions and in developing policies around RPAS technologies and will continue to do so.

As you will see in our submissions, there is enormous potential in the application of RPAS for commercial use in Australia – ranging from saving lives to saving time and money for businesses and citizens. Enabling the use of RPAS beyond visual line of sight and enabling multiple RPAS devices per operator is important for unlocking much of this potential. We do not want to see the potential for the technology blocked or limited because of recreational usage of RPAS.

We believe there are technological solutions that ensure the safety of RPAS use recreationally and commercially, which allow operators to continue to test and develop innovative solutions for contemporary issues. In particular, we think a combination of smart RPAS devices, traffic management systems and mobile network connectivity will be required to achieve this outcome.

We look forward to working with Government and CASA to develop a sensible regulatory framework that works for industry and the general public, while also keeping people safe and their personal data protected and secure. We believe there is a sensible balance to developing such a framework that:

- maximises safety, supports privacy and security, and minimises unnecessary red tape;
- allows commercial users to fulfil the potential of this technology; and
- allows recreational users to safely continue flying RPAS.

In our individual submissions we have outlined how RPAS technologies can be used in business applications and in solving many significant policy challenges in Australia. We believe that the establishment of a best-practice regulatory framework, led by industry in collaboration with CASA, is the best way to approach the mutual benefits of ensuring that we do not limit the potential of UAS products while also keeping them as safe as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of our companies, as we would be happy to provide additional details on our comments and answer any questions from the Committee.

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