



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

---

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM  
Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),  
Mr Michael Petterson MLA

## Submission Cover Sheet

**Inquiry into drone delivery systems in the ACT**

**Submission Number: 041**

**Date Authorised for Publication: 27 February 2019**

## **Submission to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism**

### **Parliamentary inquiry: INQUIRY INTO DRONE DELIVERY SYSTEM IN THE ACT**

#### **Submitted with consideration and concern.**

#### **Loss of the community's amenity**

As the Canberra Times observed, many locals "aren't comfortable with the idea of a 1.5 meter wide, load-carrying semi-autonomous aircraft cruising overhead at low altitude at speeds of up to 120km/h". The sooner these drones are taken out of the sky the better for all communities being abused by Project Wing! It appears from Government statements that it is up to residents to take them down whenever/wherever possible and regain their quality of life! They are an abomination!

In an attempt to ingratiate itself with the community generally, Project Wing has been 'brown-nosing' to "Communities at Work" giving them contributions for each flight delivery! This is the ultimate in hypocrisy.

Drones are far more irritating than lawnmowers on the week-end (as stated by Chief Minister Andrew Barr, who has been unaffected by the drones' invasion of privacy). They operate at a higher noise frequency and noise level, illegal at the 85 dB reading that has been measured. The very real problem here is that no agency is responsible for drone noise. There is a very big gap in the regulations, which Project Wing exploits. The commercial drones used by Project Wing are far more repetitive than lawnmowers and can be dangerous. Their sudden appearance overhead frightens pets and wildlife! They cause a loss of amenity for residents and will blanket the skies if allowed to perpetuate, as promised by Project Wing in the future. Project Wing has stated that there is likely to be 40,000 drone flights occurring in the ACT if the Government fully sanctions this community abuse, as it operates at the current time. Their claim that \$40 million will be injected into the ACT economy is a fantasy as they will never be accepted by a majority of residents.

I hate the noise and loss of amenity and hope they do not get further approval. My vote at the next election will be considering the ignorance of MLA Mick Gentleman in allowing this "trial" without community consultation and the apparent support for its expansion into Gungahlin suburbs! Our ACT Government seems very naive about community sentiment against this noise invasion. It would be very good if it is taken out of the hands of the ACT Government and is stopped by a responsible authority, not CASA, who see no problem with this gross intrusion and loss of amenity for residents.

The sooner these drones are brought down the better for all communities who lose their amenity when these very noisy, buzzing annoyances fly over regularly. Even worse when they hover at 7 metres to deliver their cargo (when they are very, very noisy) to the people too lazy to get off their bums and go to the shop. Politicians will pay for this gross intrusion!

It is VERY clear that Project Wing already has the approval from the ACT Government to expand into Gungahlin, even if not formalised. If this travesty continues they will soon be all over the ACT constantly buzzing and invading privacy, as they have cameras! They will fly all day with little control and with multiple drone flights by numerous companies ... a cacophony of sound overhead!!

The so-called "trial" in Bonython was not anything but a technical trial about how to fly the drones and deliver goods that people are too lazy to get off their bums and go to the shop for. Deliveries by motorcycle or car are far less invasive and quick, importantly they employ people and do not invade privacy with cameras. It has had nothing to do with the loss of amenity by residents of the areas flown over. This is a travesty and must be stopped.

These actions and new developments of this travesty being set up in Gungahlin are a true example of business interests trumping citizen's rights. As a resident of Bonython I expected the "trial" to be completed first and a thorough report presented BY THE GOVERNMENT not by the business invested in this folly of MLA Mick Gentleman. Only then should any possible expansion of this annoyance of a very noisy aerial commercial operation, in an area zoned as suburban, be even considered.

There is a reason towns and cities have zoning and restrictions on activities. Commercial zones and suburban zones, industrial zones etc. Get the commercial, very noisy drones the hell out of the suburbs! They cannot be meeting zoning restrictions. This is a travesty of our right to peace, the reason we live in the suburb of Bonython.

CASA should, but won't because of its questionable complicity, stop this immediately as a hazard to the community because it appears that the current Government of the ACT is incapable of responsible behaviour here.

Of particular note is the fact that commercial drones are not accepted in any other jurisdiction in the world! Surely the ACT Assembly members cannot be so ignorant as to not know this and the reasons why it is rejected globally.

### **Risks to property, people, pets and wildlife**

A very pleasant day was enjoyed recently partying with friends in my backyard in Bonython when the drones were not flying and the peacefulness we experienced without them. They were not flying on that day due to the extreme hot weather conditions and the ever-present risk they presented of starting a fire if one of them failed. The absence of the drones was very noticeable.

The risks are a very real concern, not only as a fire risk for the national capital's forests, threatened grasslands and grassy woodlands but also a fire and physical damage risk to residents' property and the risk of injury or death of a person. Not to mention the frightening effect on household pets and wildlife! My dog is covered by the Project Wing drones when they are flying noisily overhead or nearby, appearing suddenly and noisily, hovering so close to the houses and people!.

### **CASA's role**

CASA is the national Civil Aviation Safety Authority. They have allowed these flights against all existing regulations that apply to all drone flights. They have lost most of their integrity when it comes to drone use in Australia! No input from the public, just made up their own minds. Very suspicious!

CASA has lost its integrity and community confidence over these Project Wing drone operations and leaves open the question of what deal was made between Project Wing and CASA. Why would any Government body give free rein to a business that could only operate if it was given exclusion from all regulations that apply to all others using drones?

Perhaps this should be investigated by the incoming Federal Government Integrity Commissioner. Too much secrecy over this 'deal', which clearly is what it was and remains,

as Project Wing supposedly without approval expands into the northern suburbs of Gungahlin!

CASA has a lot of explaining to do. Why did they exempt Project Wing from operating requirements? Project Wing drone operations are free from most of the restrictions.

As I understand it, no legal approval has been given yet for Project Wing drones to operate out of Mitchell and over Gungahlin houses, nature reserves and suburbs generally. Have they pre-empted the approvals necessary?

Take the drones down! My dog is sent crazy by them and I detest the drones, the operators and Mick Gentleman MLA for ever allowing them to operate!

The drones were flying over my house in large numbers of flights on the last day of the phony "trial". 18 flights recorded and they start at 8.00 am! Appalling ACT Government management and appalling actions of CASA, an organisation that has lost most of its credibility over drone operations in Australia. They have no moral authority now to determine any regulations concerning the public's operation of drones, none whatsoever. They have demonstrated clearly that drone operators can do as they please!. CASA has no regard at all to the loss of community amenity.

This is clearly demonstrated by the illegal high noise levels (85 dB) and camera operations permitted by CASA, invading privacy and continuing to frighten and stress my dog and other pets and wildlife. Project Wing stated that they would use quieter drones with modified propellers. Given that the noise level has not reduced they clearly have either not done that or have been quite unsuccessful and we can assume it is simply not possible to have quiet drones! I will continue to urge all Australians to work hard to take down these damn drones.

CASA has waived the legal requirements for drones in approving the obnoxious use of the Wing Project drones. CASA "exempted the (Wing Project) drones from flying near buildings". They also exempted them from flying near people and from noise regulations. So much secrecy.

### **Appropriate use of drones**

Rural properties can be hundreds of kilometres from needed materials or medications. Drones should be carefully screened to operate in such situations. Of course that is likely to be not commercial (and incidentally of no financial benefit to the politicians supporting the use of drones in urban areas).

Drones could also be sanctioned for deliveries to house-bound and disabled residents who have increased difficulties getting to shops and dispensaries and who register with the government and drone operator and/or use their appropriate certification identity codes. This is very different to the community abuse by Project Wing in Bonython!

What further action can the community take? Perhaps a Class Action against the ACT Government and operator for the loss of amenity, inherent danger to people and property and the negative impact on pets and wildlife will be necessary. This is a sad conclusion.

Sincerely,

Dr Keith Williams



