

DRONE OPERATIONS OVER PORT LANDS AND WATERS PROCEDURE

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to guide the communications and approval process for the operation of drones over Port land and controlled waters.

The Mid West Ports Authority (**MWPA**) has an obligation to maintain the safety and integrity of the Port and Port Security Zone in accordance with the *Port Authorities Act 1999* and *Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act 2003*. To ensure compliance with this condition of the Act, MWPA requires Drone Operators to apply for written consent to operate in a designated security restricted zone. For the purpose of this Procedure, written consent will be in the form of an approved Application for Drone Operations Permit.

It is also the intention of this Procedure to ensure compliance with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) guidelines, the *Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) 1998*, Part 101 and the *Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018*.

2 Scope

This Procedure covers all commercial use of drones by MWPA workers, or others who intend to use drones for videography, photography or other purposes within Port lands or controlled waters.

This Procedure DOES NOT cover private use of drones for any purposes over Port controlled waters or land. Any unauthorised drones will be considered suspicious and reported to Port Security and actions taken accordingly.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Chief Executive Officer	Responsible for all media releases in accordance with Media Relations Procedure.
Drone Operator	The Drone Operator will be responsible for the preparation of a risk assessment, flight plan, submission of permit application, and ensuring this and all other MWPA procedures and applicable legislation are complied with, and an approved permit is obtained before commencing drone operations.
Harbour Master Office	Responsible for notifying ships agents of the intention to fly a drone to ensure vessel masters are aware prior to the operation. Any comments regarding interference with pilotage may also be communicated.
Permit Coordinator	Responsible for distributing the Permit to the approvals workers and issuing authorisation to the Applicant. They are also responsible for advising stakeholders through Daily Works Updates, Harbour Master's Office, and any another department as appropriate.
Permit Authoriser	MWPA worker(s) or their delegates who have relevant qualifications and/or experience to review the activities described in the Permit prior to approval.
Port Security / Deputy Port Security Officer	Responsible for reporting any unauthorised drone operations to Office of Transport Safety (OTS) or CASA on the appropriate notification forms.

4 Definitions

Drone	In line with CASA guidelines and the CASR 1998, Part 101, a drone also refers to Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) as per various interpretations.
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority. CASA is a government body that regulates aviation safety (including drones) in Australia.
MWPA	Mid West Ports Authority
Operator Accreditation	Under this Procedure, all flights within MWPA land and controlled waters are classified as ‘flying for work’ purposes and the operator must hold either a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operator Accreditation (RPA) or a Remote Pilot Licence (RePL) for individuals, additionally the business may hold a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operators Certificate (ReOC) as applicable.

5 General Requirements

5.1 WHAT IS A DRONE OPERATION?

A drone is an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) sometimes called a Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) that operates without a human pilot, crew or passengers onboard. Drone operations within MWPA controlled land and waters are classified as ‘flying for work’ and as such shall be managed according to the requirements identified by the regulator – **CASA**.

5.2 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DRONE OPERATIONS

General requirements for Drone Operations include the following.

- All drones identified for operation, regardless of size or class, will be required to operate in accordance with CASA’s guidelines. This includes mandatory minimum separation distances (30m for workers) identified in Section 5.4.
- All Drone Operators must hold suitable CASA qualifications – a Remote Pilot Licence (RePL) for individuals or a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operators Certificate (ReOC) held by a business employer. For sub 2kg drones, a Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operator Accreditation (RPA) is acceptable.
- Note that Drone Operators of drones that are in excess of 2kg who do not hold an RePL or ReOC will not be authorised to conduct drone operations at MWPA.
- The Drone Operators shall be required to meet minimum standard MWPA induction requirements and if operating within the Port Security Zone, a Maritime Security Identification card (MSIC) will be required, as exemption for an MSIC card may be issued on a case-to-case basis.
- All drones must be maintained in good working order to minimise noise output, with no objects that could drop or discharge.
- The Port site is located outside of the restricted three nautical miles around the Geraldton Regional Airport (so the provision relating to minimum distance from an airport does not apply) and the airspace is Class G (as per CASA website).
- All drone footage of the Port of Geraldton to be published or released for media purposes, requires authorisation by the CEO in accordance with Media Relations Procedure.

- Visual Line of Sight (VLOS) must be maintained as all times during the flight. The drone operator must be able to continually see, orient and navigate the drone to ensure that all separation and anti-collision controls are in place. The use of electronic aids such as First-person view, on screen or moving map displays can be used to improve situational awareness but cannot be used instead of or to replace visual line of sight.

5.3 DOCUMENTS USED TO MANAGE DRONE OPERATIONS


Mandatory documents that are required to manage drone operations include the following.

Requirement	Document
Drone Operations – General Work Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Safety and Environmental Analysis (JSEA) • Permit to Work Procedure • Authority to Work • Application for Drone Operations Permit • Copy of Remote Pilot Licence (RePL) or Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operators Certificate (ReOC) or Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operator Accreditation (RPA). • Evidence of drone registration. • Flight Path Plan (indicating launching area and area of operations).

5.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

A JSEA / Risk assessment must be completed prior to conducting drone operation works and reviewed and approved on site prior to operations commencing. The minimum written requirements recorded must include the following.

Requirement	Topic
Minimum Written Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location of Operation: The area in which the drone will operate must be identified and include the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated flight path. Must include safe landing areas in the event of unplanned control issues. • Estimated flight times. • Estimated flight height. Note that drones shall not operate above 120m (400ft) unless CASA approval has been received to exceed this and has been sighted by MWPA. • Purpose of the Operation: Identify the purpose (for example, aerial photography, survey, visual inspection). • Details of Operation: These shall be detailed including the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drones must only be operated in good visibility and weather conditions. • Operations at other times may be permissible where additional specific controls are identified. • Line of sight by the Operator must be maintained at all times. • The drone must not be operated in such a way that poses a hazard or distraction to shipping activities, worker or property. • Drones must not be flown over / above or closer than 30m from other people (not Drone Operator or Assistant) as stipulated by CASA requirements.

Requirement	Topic
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drones must have a separation distance of at least 60m from marine mammals (whales, dolphins and sea lions) as stipulated by Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018. • Drones must maintain a 100m exclusion zone around Osprey Nesting Platform on Berth 1 (vertical and horizontal).  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drone noise and its impact on workers / fauna must be considered and documented. • Planning for the possibility of a worker moving into the area of operation / landing area during flight. • Workers and Training: Identify and list the minimum number of workers required to safely complete the task and the training and competence requirements that must be met.

5.5 PERMIT TO WORK REQUIREMENTS

All drone operations shall be managed by an Application for Drone Operations Permit.

Refer to the Permit to Work Procedure for detailed information regarding the permit management process including application and approval timeframes.

6 Associated Documents

Document Title
Application for Drone Operations Permit
Media Relations Procedure
Permit to Work and Authority to Work Procedure
Worker and Port User Handbook

Location – Mid West Ports Intranet – [Document Centre](#)

7 References

Act or Regulation
<i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i>
<i>Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018</i>
<i>Port Authorities Act 1999</i>
<i>Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR) 1998</i>
<i>Maritime Transport and Offshore Facilities Security Act 2003</i>
<i>Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022</i>
<i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i>

Location - Western Australian - <https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au> | Australian - <https://www.legislation.gov.au>

8 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This document is required to be reviewed every two years from the last scheduled review date.

Minor updates made within this two-year period, will not be taken as a *full review*.

The Document Custodian is responsible for conducting the review in accordance with **Controlled Documents Review and Approval Process Work Instruction**.

9 Administration

Document Custodian:	Deputy Harbour Master
Document Approver:	Harbour Master
Approval Date:	10 November 2025
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Attachment A – Permit Process Diagram

