

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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Is this guide for you?

This guide is for people wishing to conduct certain commercial operations using micro or 'excluded' remotely piloted aircraft (RPA).

- › Micro RPA are drones that weigh 250 g or less.
- › Excluded RPA are very small, small, or medium drones used in very specific commercial situations (activity and location) defined below.

These micro and excluded RPA can be operated safely in Australian airspace without requiring CASA authorisations such as a [remote pilot licence](#) (RePL) or an [RPA operator's certificate](#) (ReOC).

However, you will need to register your drone and obtain an RPA operator accreditation. These can be obtained in the myCASA portal. You must be 16 years or older and, at all times, operate according to the standard RPA operating conditions (set out in this guide) and any explicit conditions relating to the flight of particular excluded RPA.

CASA has produced a short safety video of the rules that apply to micro and excluded RPA used commercially and for activities other than sport and recreation.

Within the aviation legislative framework, drones operated for sport and recreation are defined as model aircraft. Drones operated for a purpose other than sport and recreation (e.g. drones used commercially for hire and reward) are defined as RPA.

The relevant legislation and guidance material is available on the CASA website.

This guide is not for users of model aircraft (drones operated for sport and recreation).

This guide is not for RePL holders conducting other forms of commercial operations under an RPA operator's certificate (ReOC).

Types of RPA by weight

RPA are classified by weight:

Micro	› 250 g or less
Very small	› more than 250 g, but no more than 2 kg
Small	› more than 2 kg, but not more than 25 kg
Medium	› more than 25 kg, but not more than 150 kg
Large	› more than 150 kg

Types of RPA that can be operated as 'excluded' RPA

(CASR 101.237)

Micro RPA (250 g or less)

Micro RPA can be used for commercial activities (payment or reward). You do not need to hold a RePL, but you will need to

- › be 16 years or older to obtain a valid RPA operator accreditation
- › register your RPA before the first flight
- › operate your RPA in standard RPA operating conditions at all times.

Micro RPA may be operated in controlled airspace, including within 5.5 km (3 NM) of a controlled aerodrome, but must remain below 120 m (400 ft) and never be operated in the approach and departure paths of the aerodrome or within the grounds of the aerodrome.

Very small RPA (more than 250 g, but not more than 2 kg)

Very small RPA may be operated as excluded RPA for commercial activities (payment or reward) for work, research, training or community services; basically, any activity that is not sport or recreation. Common activities include photography and film-making, media, university research, real estate, surf lifesaving, construction and trade. You do not need to hold a RePL, but you will need to:

- › be 16 years or older to obtain a valid RPA operator accreditation
- › register your RPA before the first flight
- › operate your RPA in standard RPA operating conditions at all times.

Small RPA (more than 2 kg, but not more than 25 kg)

Small RPA may be operated as excluded RPA over the RPA owner's land for activities such as aerial spotting, land surveying, agricultural operations, infrastructure inspections or carrying cargo. The controller does not need to hold a RePL, but the activity must meet these requirements:

- › the controller must hold a valid accreditation
- › the RPA must be registered before the first flight
- › the RPA must be operated in standard RPA operating conditions at all times
- › records of the activity must be kept.

To operate a small, excluded RPA over your own land:

- › the operator, controller or owner of the RPA, or the owner or occupier of the land, or any person on whose behalf the activity is conducted, may not receive any money or remuneration for the operation of the RPA
- › the controller must be the owner of the RPA, or a person operating on behalf of the RPA owner
- › the RPA must be operated over land owned or occupied by the RPA owner
- › the RPA must be operated in standard operating conditions
- › the RPA must be operated for one of the following purposes (CASR 101.237):
 - » aerial spotting
 - » aerial photography
 - » agricultural operations
 - » aerial communications relay
 - » carriage of cargo
 - » any activity similar to those described above

Medium RPA (more than 25 kg, but not more than 150 kg)

Medium RPA may be operated as excluded RPA over your own land and must comply with the same requirements for small RPA. However, you are also required to hold a RePL and a specific rating for that RPA. Further details can be found on the CASA website.

Large RPA (more than 150 kg)

Large RPA cannot be operated as excluded RPA.

Excluded RPA used for training and gaining practical experience

An RPA is also an excluded RPA if it is being operated solely for the purpose of a person receiving training from a ReOC holder authorised to provide RePL training.

You may operate an excluded RPA to:

- › gain the experience needed to meet the 5-hour minimum experience requirement for the grant of a remote pilot licence (RePL)
- › gain practical experience and competency in the operation of an RPA not specified on your RePL if you already hold a RePL. This must only be a small RPA of the same category specified in your current RePL (eg aeroplane, helicopter, multirotor), but it may exceed the weight class.

You must follow the standard operating procedures set out in this guide.

You may wish to use a logbook to record flight hours as evidence of flying experience and competence. A sample logbook to record RPA flying hours can be found on the CASA website. You should record:

- › the flight time
- › the location
- › the RPA used
- › any training completed
- › a short description of any tasks performed.

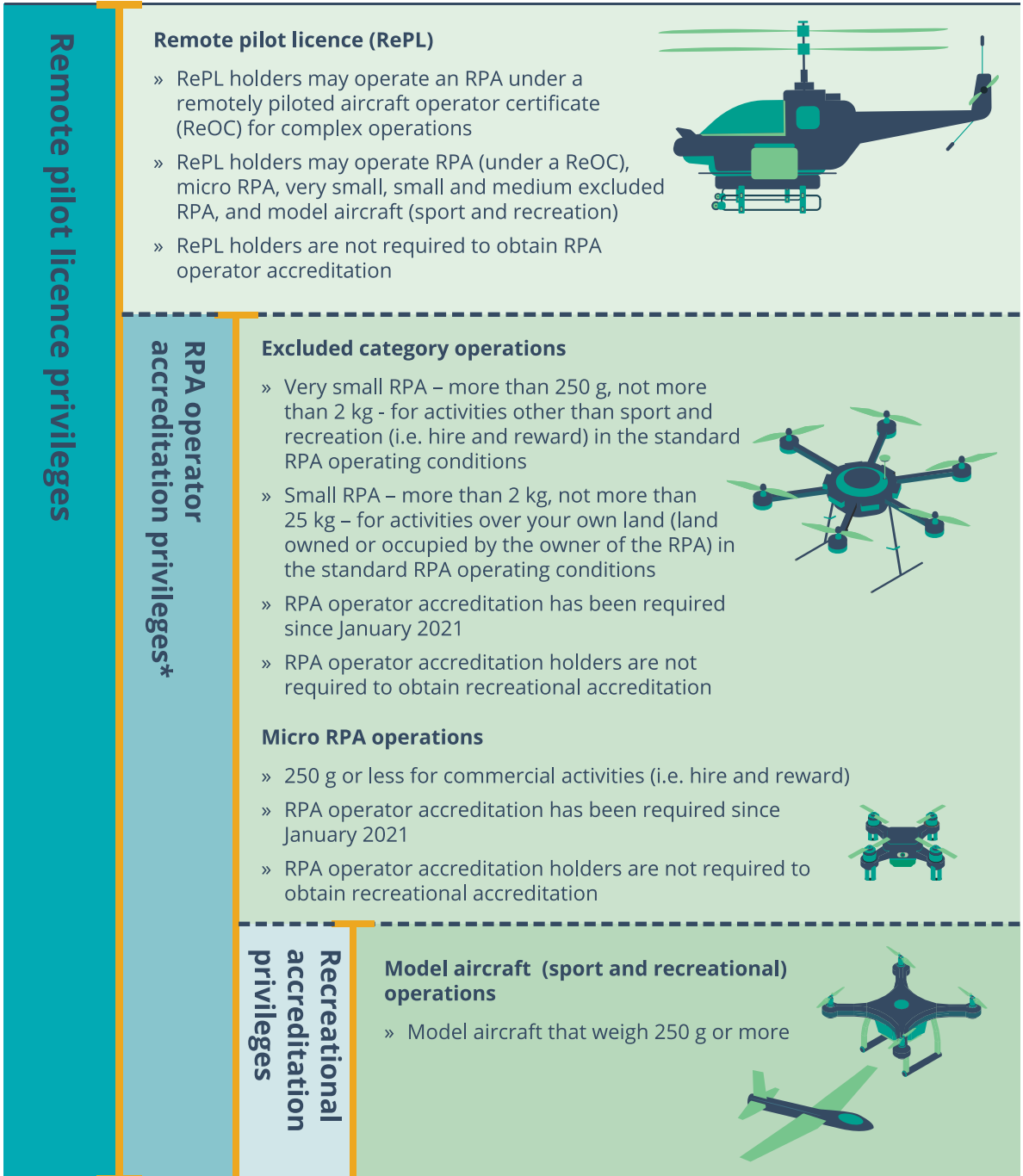
A list of CASA-approved training organisations is available on CASA's website. These organisations are certified to provide professional training for the grant of a RePL and may also offer shorter courses for recreational and excluded RPA operators.

Educational purposes

Flying a drone or model aircraft up to 7 kg for educational purposes at recognised educational institutions is considered flying recreationally.

However, you will be considered to be flying commercially if you receive remuneration (money) for the flying, or use the drone to promote or advertise the educational institution. If you are flying commercially, extra rules apply in order to operate in the excluded RPA category. This information is contained in the guide for your reference.

If your drone operations aren't considered 'flying recreationally', consider your options under the 'Small RPA excluded' category.

Figure 1: Remote pilot licence and accreditation privileges

* Accreditation is free and valid for three years
 An RPA operator accreditation allows a person of at least 18 years of age to supervise a person under 16 to fly an RPA.

Standard RPA operating conditions

(CASR 101.238)

An RPA is operated in standard RPA operating conditions if, at all times during the operation, the RPA is:

- › operated in Australian territory
- › operated within the visual line of sight of the person operating the RPA
- › operated at or below a height of 400 ft by day
- › not operated within 30 m of a person who is not directly associated with the operation of the RPA
- › not operated:
 - » in a prohibited area
 - » in a restricted area that is classified as RA3
 - » in a restricted area that is classified as RA2 or RA1 otherwise than in accordance with regulation 101.065
 - » over a populous area
 - » within 5.5 km (3 NM) of the measurement point of the runway of the controlled aerodrome
- › not operated over an area where a fire, police or other public safety or emergency operation is being conducted without the approval of a person in charge of the operation, and the person operating the RPA operates only that RPA.

Gaining practical experience

There are no formal training requirements for remote pilots of excluded RPA (with the exception of medium RPA being used for 'landholder rule' operations when the pilot needs a RePL). However, all remote pilots should undergo training to learn how to fly an RPA safely and without creating a hazard to other aircraft, people and property.

You should learn to control your RPA within its design parameters and in varied operating conditions, including:

- › dealing appropriately with variable weather (e.g. strong winds)
- › abnormal flight situations
- › emergencies
- › system malfunctions

It's important to be proficient in all flight modes of your RPA, including manual control in the event of loss or degradation of autopilot.

When training or practising, you must keep the RPA at least 30 m from people and property. However, it's advisable to increase this distance until you're competent with controlling the RPA. CASA considers that 5 hours flight time is the minimum necessary to gain a basic level of competency for any category of RPA.

Record keeping (MOS Division 10.3)

Small and medium excluded RPA operators must keep an operational log of each flight (CASR Part 101, MOS section 10.10).

The operator is required to keep a record of the following:

- › the nature and purpose of the operation
- › the specific location of the operation and the maximum height at which the RPA was flown
- › information identifying the RPA, including the type, model and unique identification mark
- › the remote pilot station for the operation
- › the dates and times of the operation
- › the name and aviation reference number (ARN) of the controller
- › whether the RPA was serviceable after the final flight of the day and the nature of any unserviceability.

An operational record should be created as soon as practicable after each flight and kept for a period of three years after the last time the RPA is operated (by the operator).



CASA does not specify the form of the RPA operational log. The operator may keep the log physically or electronically, as long as the records are available on request from CASA.

Checklist 1 – Can you operate your drone for commercial activities without a RePL or ReOC?

STEP 1

Are you flying your drone for sport and recreation?

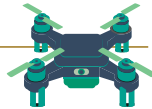


- Yes** – you are flying a *model aircraft*. Use a [CASA-verified safety app](#) to check where you can fly and follow the drone safety rules
- No** – you are flying an RPA, go to **Step 2**



STEP 2

Is your RPA 250 g or less?



- Yes** – it is a *micro RPA*, which may be used for hire and reward, but it must be registered, and you must be accredited and follow the drone safety rules. See Chapter 2
- No** – go to **Step 3**



STEP 3

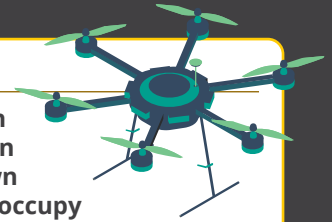
Is your RPA more than 250 g, but not more than 2 kg?



- Yes** – it is a *very small RPA*, which may be operated for hire and reward provided it is registered, you are accredited and you follow the drone safety rules and standard operating conditions. See Chapter 2
- No** – go to **Step 4**

STEP 4

Is your RPA more than 2 kg but not more than 25 kg, and will be flown over land you own or occupy for one of the following purposes:



- › aerial spotting
- › aerial photography
- › agricultural operations
- › aerial communications relay
- › carriage of cargo
- › any activity similar to those described above?

- Yes** – it is a *small RPA*, which may be operated for hire and reward, but it must be registered, you must be accredited, you must follow the drone safety rules and standard operating conditions, and you must not be remunerated (paid). See Chapter 2
- No** – a RePL and ReOC is required



A medium RPA (more than 25 kg, but no more than 150 kg) may also be operated as set out above in Step 4 if you or the operator holds a RePL with a specific rating for that RPA.

Note: This checklist omits RPA that are excluded on the basis that they are being used for training or for gaining practical experience and proficiency.