

# Proactive Always Better Than Reactive

With the move by the CAA to base its initiatives on risk rather than compliance, it needs more information about what's happening 'out there'.

The huge increase in operations by Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems – RPAS, or drones – has generated a tsunami of what the CAA calls “Aviation Related Concerns” (ARCs).

People can report an ARC if they are uneasy about the safety or security of some aspect of aviation practice in New Zealand.

The CAA receives about 400 reports a year.

But they're not part of the information the CAA receives under Part 12 *Accidents, Incidents, and Statistics*, or serious harm injuries reported under the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992.



Roger Shepherd, CAA's Investigating Officer of ARCs.

“It might be a low-flying aircraft or someone talking on a cellphone during flight,” says CAA’s Investigating Officer of ARCs, Roger Shepherd. “Or it could be substandard maintenance on an aircraft or spray drift from helicopters.”

To report an ARC, anyone can call 0508 4SAFETY (0508 472 338), or email [isi@caa.govt.nz](mailto:isi@caa.govt.nz).

‘Anyone’ includes members of the public, an aviation participant, CAA personnel, or other government organisations.

While ARCs can be filed anonymously, that makes it very hard for Roger to investigate.

“People worry about the activity they’re reporting ending up in prosecution, but very few cases go that way,” says Roger.

They would only be the very serious ones, like the guy who flew his RPA in front of an approaching tow plane.

Often, the CAA’s response to an ARC is to talk with the person involved, about their possibly unsafe operation.

“Some require nothing more than a quick call or an email.

“Most people are really grateful for the information, and it’s important the CAA hears both sides of the story,” says Roger.

The ARCs pouring in about RPAS are allowing the CAA to understand how widespread drone-related problems are.

That information is vital as it tries to mitigate the risk of RPAS operations without quashing their commercial potential.

However, Roger says it’s not just RPAS blunders the CAA needs to hear about.

“We really rely on everyone in aviation, and on the ground, to let us know if something they see concerns them.

“Every ARC is potentially a ‘puzzle piece’ that, when put together with other puzzle pieces, allows us to see, as much as possible, the whole safety picture.

“ARCs help the CAA to be proactive about risk, rather than reactive to catastrophe,” he says.

“Given that people voicing their concerns potentially saves money, machines and lives, regular ARC reporting is a no-brainer really” ■

The Ministry of Transport’s current review of the Civil Aviation Act 1990 may result in changes to some of the current CAA processes described in this article. Any amendments to the Act are unlikely to be in force before 2016.