



# ACUO - Australian Certified UAS Operators

## Promoting Commercial UAS Operations in the NAS By Brad Mason

The Australian Certified UAV Operators Association (ACUO), has recently been founded with a provisional management committee established by the currently CASA certified UAS operators. The primary objective of ACUO is to represent the interests of the CASA certified UAS operators in Australia, who hold a licence under CASR 1998 Part 101. The Association will be registered as an incorporated private non-for-profit organisation. The association will comprise two forms of membership. Primary membership will be open to private firms and individuals who are CASA certified UAS operators. An associate membership will be open to firms and organisations in support of the commercial UAS industry. The following views define what ACUO is and what it hopes to achieve.

### Mission

Its mission is to foster, encourage and develop a safe and effective commercial unmanned aviation sector in Australia with minimum cost.

### Vision

- To be a leader in the development, promotion & administration of commercial unmanned aviation in Australia;
- To protect and grow the commercial unmanned sector of aviation, recognising the views of certified UAV operators and to promote consumer confidence in commercial UAS operations.

### ACUO Values

The core values of ACUO are:

- Regulations specific to commercial UAS must continue to be upheld and complied with to allow ACUO members to safely integrate UAS into the NAS within the limits of regulatory categories.
- Any certified UAS operator should, in compliance of the civil aviation flight rules, be able to fly commercial UAS in the NAS with minimum regulation.
- Commercial unmanned aviation shall be affordable and accessible to the maximum number of Australians.
- The continued development of self administration of our own affairs.

### UAS Activity in Australia

Commercial applications for UAS in Australia have been evolving for many years and are beginning to now show positive returns in the market place. Examples of ACUO members activity in commercial UAS operations include; aerial advertising, aerial photography, aerial monitoring for scientific applications and aerial survey for GIS data collection in environmental, vegetation and infrastructure management.

Although the bulk of commercial UAS activity is with small UAS, the Customs Coastwatch trials of the large Heron UAS in Northern Australia last year was just one example of how large UAS can also successfully work within the regulatory framework provided.

### UAS Regulations Development

In February of this year CASA inspectors began a targeted national

surveillance programme of Australian certified UAS operators as part of a scheduled review of CASR 1998 Part 101. It is expected that this process should be completed by May 2009 and CASA will report its findings in June 2009. The review has been welcomed by CASA certified UAS operators in Australia as a positive 'next step' in the integration of unmanned aviation with the manned aviation sector.

It is interesting to note that although Australia has enjoyed a regulatory lead in the introduction of unmanned aviation, this regulatory freedom alone isn't the impetus for an immediate explosion of growth in commercial UAS activity.

A number of industry specific developments are also required to compliment any regulations.

Acceptable standards of UAS airworthiness and reliability, particularly small UAS, Public Liability insurance and standard operating procedures that integrate, not isolate, UAS activity from manned aviation in the NAS are fundamental areas of development for commercial success.

There is also a considerable amount of market development required to make commercial UAS operations viable from a business context.

The commercial UAS operators that make up ACUO, the private, small to medium enterprises that are at the forefront of UAS technology in the civilian sphere, are the vital link that bridges the gaps between the aviation regulators, the wider UAS industry and potential markets.

ACUO will play a major support role in bringing together all these parts. Educating those new to the industry and providing guidance to the regulators, the wider UAS industry and researchers on what works from a commercial perspective and how best to integrate unmanned aviation into the NAS.

### Future Actions

The Australian regulatory framework for UAS is a sound basis for further development and ACUO will continue to work with the regulators to improve and enhance this regulatory structure. ACUO will also be initiating a common database of commercial flight information, flight hours and operational guidelines to show and 'prove' the reliability and safety of commercial UAS operations. Such a database will provide regulators, UAS manufacturers and insurers with reliable information on which to make sound judgements for further regulatory reform, airworthiness requirements & affordable insurance premiums.

Australia stands as a good example of how, even with the regulatory freedom to operate UAS commercially, commercial success and expansion is not a given and that the long forecast for growth in commercial activity is still in development and will be so for some time yet.

