

Chad Nowak



I want to tell you a story. I have grown up loving all forms of aviation. As a kid I would do what ever I could to be involved - just be close to aviation. In my early teens I got into control line and then RC aircraft. This went from a simple hobby flying in my back yard to serious competition F3B flying where I would devote all spare time to make the Aussie team for the world champs. After time due to my thirst for knowledge in the engineering side I

learned about basic aerodynamics and composite construction till I was designing my own models and also helping to build fully moulded carbon composite airframes.

After many years of this combined with other areas of RC hobbyist fun I took on full scale gliding. This not only honed my understanding of weather and piloting ability but I also got a firm grip on the seriousness of safety, procedures, risk management and the importance of decision making. After many years getting my skill level up I started down the same path of serious competition and devoting all my time and money towards competing in the world champs. Along the way the safety aspect and constant inflight judgement calls became a reality and I lost some good friends who made poor decisions. It taught me about a persons own responsibilities to their choices and actions in the air.

I also became an instructor and gave a lot of my time freely to teach others the joy I already had about the sky. This gave me an understanding of how different people think and react in stressful situations as well as how they see the world. Even though I had no reason to put the money into it I got many opportunities to play in the powered aircraft section including commercial jet airliners and this gave me an understanding of the skills required to fly



commercial and powered aircraft that were quite different to what I was used to. My engineering mind also didn't stop so I took on some mentors and began learning about airframe construction (which was remarkably similar to the models I used to build), maintenance and repair. Before long I not only had multiple maintenance and repair ratings on structures and motors but I also took on the State Technical Airworthiness Officer role for GFA QLD. This gave me an unpaid role as a CASA official and taught me the ways of regulation, paperwork and red tape. Some was useful and some only made life hell for everyone involved. Part of my duties were to conduct audits on clubs and aircraft which I had the power to shut down if required. I was also required to assess crash sites to determine if the airframe was a contributing factor.

After many years of devoting my life to full scale I took my son to an RC model airshow and we got back into RC as a father/son thing. Shortly afterwards I saw on YouTube these cool thing called drones and FPV. I used him as an excuse to try it out. I got addicted and my life began to be devoted to these cool new toys. The more I fiddled the better I got and the more cool things were happening. I started making videos on YouTube because I just liked doing that kind of thing and before I knew it I started getting following. I realised there was something special there and thought if I put some effort in I could maybe make this into some sort of a career down the track. Wasn't sure what but hey, it was fun so nothing would be lost. Out of no where it became really popular and before I knew it I had many manufacturer sponsors and was being flown free of charge to the first

unofficial world champs in the USA. Oh great, here I am putting my all into another world champs dream except this time I actually made it. It was crazy so I concentrated on having a good time. It must have done something right because I walked away winning every single event and more prizes and prize money I knew what to do with.

On returning home suddenly the TV stations all wanted to talk to me so I found my 5 minutes of fame chatting to national news stations and breakfast shows. It was at this point that I started to realise the issues with the slow pace of regulation versus the fast pace of technology changes in the drone sector so I, along with a friend (Mark Cocquio), started contacting the government organisations like CASA and ACMA to start up a dialogue to help create a way for the community to talk to the regulators and the other way around. I figured my knowledge in how agencies like CASA and my following in the hobbyist community worked could really help things. Unfortunately the response was basically a hand in the face saying we don't care and I eventually got threats from CASA of a \$10,000 fine after being on TV trying to promote this wonderful hobby. Needless to say I lost faith in those places pretty quickly and let them do what ever they were going to do because it was evident early on that they were not going to listen to those actually in the industry unless there was money involved.

Not long after my competition victory I was invited to Hawaii to spend a week flying drones to promote the next world championships which I accepted. During that trip I started up a plan to start another YT channel with other pilots and mentors to help promote this

wonderful hobby and educate and inspire others to try it. Rotor Riot was born. I then spent the next two years traveling all around the world, flying in amazing locations, competing at various world level competitions and trying to inspire a future generation to show how fun and important drones will be in our future lives by showing what they can do. To date I have now visited 27 countries over 2 years and flown in some of the most amazing locations like Chernobyl Ukraine, the Great Wall of China and raced quads on the Chanselise right next to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris France and in the middle of Dubai among many other mind blowing locations. Over time I have helped to push the boundaries of what was thought possible with drones.

My engineering side did not lay idle either as I spent time with various manufacturers to test, give feedback and help design many new elements of what many take for granted in today's age. My aero understanding helped me to design new propellers, my knowledge in composites helped me to create new frame designs and my understanding in electronics helped make some newer Flight Controller and ESC technologies come to light.

The whole time I have been flying drones people have said the sky is falling and it's dangerous and illegal and people will die. The whole time I have been involved with media their main focus is to claim I am spying on someone or trying to run into someone to injure or kill them. Most of the time when I fly in various places around the

world I fly illegally because the shallow minded governments who listen to the negative media which in turn scares the people regardless of what we do. At the end of the day considering my past experience I have to seriously question the regulations put in place by the agencies that have even admitted they don't know enough and can't regulate the documents they put out which are written in such a way that 4 different people can get 4 different outcomes from it.



I have tried my best to do the right thing and have a full understanding of what these things are capable of and I honestly believe the officials are clutching at straws doing what they are doing and this is why. Organisations like CASA are only run for one reason. Safety. They want to ensure everything is safe. Unfortunately life is not safe. If we tried for 100% safety then no one would even take off because people die up in the skies all the time. Therefore it becomes about risk mitigation and reviewing and learning from accidents, injuries and fatalities and that's what I begin to laugh at. Considering there are now more drone flights per day than full scale if you look at our safety record (which by the way has been almost completely self regulated so far) you will see that we are making a laughing stock of all other forms of aviation. No deaths. No life threatening injuries and compared to the number of flights almost non existent minor injuries. As far as issues with others not involved in the operation of the drone the same can be said. We've not managed to kill anyone doing silly things or or kill a whole family innocently driving a car. OK what about midairs with aircraft? As far as I'm aware there have been only 2 confirmed midairs with aircraft total. That's nothing!! Oh and what happened to those aircraft? They kept flying and landed normally. Maybe we

should look at the bird strike stats each year. Even if you add on all these unsubstantiated drone sightings that end up being only plastic bags this hobby still looks pretty damn amazing. Despite all this, will be a serious accident at some time in the future? That is a certainty with or without regulations. Remember there is no such thing as 100%. Sorry but this head-in-the-sand thing is not helping anyone. What it is doing is turning those who used to try and follow the rules into people that just plain don't care anymore. That helps no one and ends up worse.

So do I think regulation is important? Sure. Just not regulation that has come from educated desk jockeys with no "actual" experience and who are only interested in where the most money is coming from.

