

MEDIA RELEASE

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The drones are here; who's really prepared?

This is the question the North Sydney Innovation Network has asked in a report, released today. There is great potential from drone¹ and other emerging technologies but they say that to reap the benefits, more needs to be done, particularly in engaging the community, businesses and regulators and actively planning for future smarter cities.

The report, *Flying Robots in the Skies Above Our Neighbourhoods: Are North Shore Councils and Communities Ready for Drones?* explores the drone market, different types and uses for drones, opportunities and risks, and what Sydney's North Shore Councils are doing to educate, regulate and facilitate this technology.

Jono Herrman, Chair of the North Sydney Innovation Network, said the report was launched with the intentions of sparking discussion about drone technology and encouraging organisations to take on board the recommendations for unlocking the opportunities.

"Technology and innovation in its many forms has the potential to make our lives so much better but there are also risks of our lives being made worse," he said.

"We as a society need to critically examine and prepare for new innovations, sometimes overcoming the hype to truly ask 'how do we build the future cities we want?'"

Having life-saving medication or a parcel delivered in minutes by a drone may sound like science fiction. But wide-scale use of autonomous (or 'unmanned') technology is on the brink of being part of the urban streetscape.

Drones are being used for innovative transport, logistics and customer services and have long been flown for military, emergency, natural resource management and agricultural activities. The development and application of drone technology is a growing industry and companies like Google and Amazon are investing.

In Sydney, drones are commonly used for photography (particularly in real estate and the film industry) and recreationally across suburban parks and backyards.

Mr Herrman says that in our age of great technology advances we are capable of better work, travel and lifestyle but even WiFi, an Australian invention, is unreliable right in the centre of North Sydney.

"We can do much better and we are calling on councils and others involved in planning our North Shore areas to factor in drone (and other) technologies early," he said.

¹ 'Drone' is a general term for technology formally known as 'unmanned aerial vehicles' (UAVs) and 'unmanned aircraft systems' (UAS).

“We hear people talking about smart and connected cities and potential improvements to our ways of living like accurate tracking of buses and trains to facilitate better commutes to work. But what will it take to make this a reality?

“There are opportunities for the North Shore councils to take a leading position here to build the best tech-enabled suburbs and community places and we are here to help spark and support that engagement,” he said.

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For more information

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The report is available:

- On the North [Sydney Innovation Network's website](http://www.northsydneyinnovation.org/news/) (<http://www.northsydneyinnovation.org/news/>)
- In our [public Dropbox](http://tinyurl.com/NSINdbx) (<http://tinyurl.com/NSINdbx>). Go to *Submissions and Issues Papers As Released > 20180427 Drone Report.pdf*.

The North Sydney Innovation Network promotes and enhances the contribution of innovation-related businesses, particularly new startups and fast-growth businesses, to the economy and society of the North Sydney region. We connect startups, established businesses, VCs/investors, government agencies, NFPs, and education institutes. NSIN supports events, an online community, policy and advocacy initiatives and the development of a major innovation precinct for the north.