

Land Owner Information

Prepared co-operatively by SAFA and VHPA, Dec 2019

What are Hang gliding and Paragliding?

Hang Gliding is an aviation sport that commenced in the 1970s, with its sister sport, Paragliding, starting about fifteen years later. Today, there are over 3000 Sports Aviation Federation of Australia (SAFA) members with 800 resident in Victoria. The Victorian Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association (VHPA) is the Victorian branch of the SAFA.

Unlike uncontrolled sports (eg kite surfing, horse riding), hang gliding and paragliding are highly regulated throughout every Australian State and Territory. In fact, the sports are regulated by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA), and all pilots are required by law to be certificated by SAFA, must complete theory exams, practical training, and maintain their licence and currency to continue flying, exactly as do pilots of more conventional aircraft. See Appendix A.

Hang glider craft comprise special sailcloth material on an aircraft aluminium/carbon frame (rather like kites), while paragliders are ram-air aerofoils shaped by Kevlar lines (rather like elongated-shaped parachutes). The pilot is suspended within the frame or at the base of the lines respectively, and controls the craft by weightshift and by altering wing shape. Every glider flying in Australia has been manufactured and tested to mandatory, internationally-prescribed aircraft standards.

How Do they Stay Up?

Both hang gliders and paragliders are lightweight, motorless, *completely silent*, 'free-flight' craft that can only launch from hills and ridges of a particular shape, which directs airflow smoothly upwards and allows them to soar for as long as the wind continues. In some places, thermals – rising columns of air – also let pilots stay aloft by spiralling up like eagles and, by flying between thermals, to travel cross-country, as do sailplanes.

Free-flight hang gliders and paragliders can also be towed up by cars, winches or aircraft, pilots release from the line and continue to climb in thermals. Towing is from large, flat, open – and usually remote – inland paddocks.

Hang gliders and paragliders land more like butterflies than conventional aircraft, with slow speeds and in small spaces. Experienced pilots can land consistently on or within a few metres of their intended spot and, in stronger winds, hover or descend vertically. Because they are gliders, they do not "fall" out of the sky when the wind stops –pilots simply glide to the ground and land, like birds.

Hang glider and paraglider pilots in Australia fly in every state & territory from private, council and state-owned land.

Powered paragliders and Powered hang gliders

Powered paragliders and powered hang gliders have small motors to provide thrust. Because they can launch from almost any, mostly flat, open space, they are usually specifically excluded from the unique hill/slope type sites required by the free-flight forms of the sport. The motors are specially designed to limit noise and are small enough to be carried on the pilots back. There are further minimum heights, and flight path limitations placed on the pilots by, to ensure engine noise is no more noticeable than conventional aircraft.

Who are pilots?

Pilots come from every walk of life, and the sport itself promotes self-belief and a healthy respect for the environment and others, irrespective of background or status. The demographic is an older one, with most pilots aged in their 40s or above.

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You, Your Land and Your Local Flying Club

Although the sports are regulated nationally by CASA and administered by the SAFA, they are managed at State level by well-organised, voluntary, non-profit Regional Associations and, locally, by Clubs. It will usually be your local club member with whom you'll discuss and agree terms to access your property.

Flying sites are very rare and very precious, and you can be confident that you and your land will be treated with the greatest respect. Your goodwill and satisfaction are essential to us, and you'll decide the exact conditions under which pilots may operate from your land.

All around Australia are sites on private land where Clubs have maintained excellent decades-long relationships with landholders. Financially and/or physically, clubs regularly assist landholders in weed control, fencing, revegetation, track upkeep and other maintenance. Some landholders even enjoy going up with pilots for tandem flights.

Arrangements may be in the form of licences, leases, consent or simple verbal agreements, with or without access limitations/rules or site fees. We can provide a pro-forma consent agreement if required.

Lambing/fire season/erosion or other concerns?

Decades of successful partnerships between landholders and clubs have created effective Pilot Codes of Conduct that addresses landowner concerns. See Appendix B.

These may include seasonal restrictions, such as;

During lambing

When access tracks are very wet

During fire season

Harvesting

Insurance and Indemnity

The SAFA has a A\$20M policy of insurance that covers the landholders, SAFA members, its Regional Associations, and clubs: The cover specifically indemnifies, and thereby protects "*owners of property or land being used for the insureds activities.*" Copies of our Certificate of Insurance currency and policies are available on the SAFA website www.hgfa.asn.au, or we can provide printed copies on request.

What about Plants and Wildlife?

Unlike sports that require infrastructure such as clubhouses or playing fields, the environmental impact of Hang Gliding and Paragliding is negligible - much less than that of cycling or even walking. With a 'playing field' in the air, the sports have minimal effects on vegetation, and this is reflected in the existence of many sites within National Parks around Australia. When parked, a hang glider's footprint on the ground is only about the area of a single human foot; a paraglider is constructed of fabric that has similarly little impact. Birds quickly become accustomed to us, and 'fly neighbourly' agreements easily accommodate sensitive raptor breeding seasons in National Parks.

Any Other Questions?

The Appendices contain more detailed information about hang gliding and paragliding operations, if you would like to know more, please feel free ask your local Club Representative or contact either Sports Aviation Federation of Australia or Victorian Hang Gliding & Paragliding Association direct.

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APPENDIX A

Operational Regulations & Controls

1.1 Flight Operations

Controls and standards are established for hang gliding and paragliding operations throughout Australia by ensuring pilots and the equipment they operate comply with the Sports Aviation Federation of Australia Operations Manual and Civil Aviation Regulations.

The Operations Manual provides the framework and rules for all flying activities under the jurisdiction of the SAFA. This framework includes measures to provide for the effective management of pilot safety and measures specifically designed to protect members of the public and their property. Key areas covered by the Operations Manual and Civil Aviation Regulations include:

- Pilot and Aircraft Certification
- Site ratings
- Guidelines covering launch and landing zones; and the
- Mandatory National Safety System.

An overview of these key areas is provided below.

1.2 Pilot and Aircraft Certification

Hang gliding and paragliding are highly regulated at every level and in a consistent manner throughout every Australian State and Territory. All hang glider and paraglider pilots, as required by Commonwealth law, must be members of, and be flight certificated by, the Sports Aviation Federation of Australia. Just as for pilots of other aircraft, certification follows the successful completion of a mandated practical training syllabus and theoretical examinations under a Chief Flight Instructor at a Registered Flight School. Similarly as for pilots of all aircraft, hang glider and paraglider pilots must maintain a minimum number of logged hours annually to remain current and to renew their membership.

All hang glider and paraglider aircraft are manufactured to International prescribed aircraft standards regulated and stringently tested by the Deutscher Hangergleiterverband (DHV) in Germany, the United States Hang Gliders Manufacturing Association (USA) and/or the British Hang Gliding Association (UK), which certify all gliders.

1.3 Site Ratings

The SAFA has in place a series of standard pilot experience ratings (PG1 thru 5, Supervised, Intermediate and Advanced, plus Instructor and Safety Officer levels). To minimise the potential for accidents, a site rating correlating to pilot certificated flight experience ratings is applied. This rating reflects the difficulty of either the launch, flight conditions, or landing for the particular location (the rating for a site may be different for high and low tide conditions, for example). Pilots fly only sites suited to their piloting standard and this is overseen at Club level by designated Safety Officers, Senior Safety Officers, and mentoring by experienced pilots.

1.4 Controls over landings and landing zones.

Landings are performed in accordance with the SAFA operations manual and regulated under Civil Aviation Regulations.

Flights do not confer on an operator of a hang glider or paraglider, any rights as against the owner or occupier of any land on or over which the operations are conducted, or prejudice in any way the rights and remedies which a person may have in respect of any injury to persons or damage to property caused directly or indirectly by the hang glider.

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Pilots will not select or designate as an intended landing area, nor land on, except in circumstances of emergency, any property in respect of which permission to land has been expressly denied.

When flying sites are on private property, typically farmland, in all cases Clubs have received the specific agreement of landholders to either gain access to or launch or landing sites through their property or to launch and land on their property.

Agreements always require pilots to respect the wishes of landholders at all times.

1.5 The Mandatory National Safety Management System

All accidents and incidents are subject to the SAFA's CASA-mandated Safety Management System, which allows for reporting, analysis and dissemination of information to the relevant Aviation authorities and SAFA members. The reporting system identifies causes and risks, and aims to prevent recurrence: pilot safety is a high priority for those involved at every level of our sport.

All Clubs implement training in the form of First Aid Courses, information nights, Safety Officer updates and licence upgrades for their members. There is also much informal safety-oriented discussion in online forums.

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APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE PILOT CODE OF CONDUCT

The [CLUB] has the use of several sites. Please be sensible. Follow all site rules and help us to keep our flying sites. Management of flying sites is everyone's responsibility - pilots need to 'fly neighbourly'.

In joining the [CLUB] you have agreed to:

- Treat landowners well: without their goodwill we can't fly; don't take them for granted. Provide landowners with signed waivers where required.
- If you open a gate you close it; If there is more than one car you still close it behind all of them, at the next gate somebody else does it all for you.
- Not cause any grass or bush fire – obey landowner rules (Petrol cars have very hot catalytic convertors).
- Not smoke on launch sites or in landing areas.
- Report fire outbreaks if you see one (eg when flying or on launch) to CFS via UHF radio, VHF radio or telephone.
- Display a Red Streamer if you are a 'Supervised' rated pilot.
- Not bring pets on launch or to landing areas
- Not take vehicles into cropped paddocks
- Keep vehicle speeds low and appropriate to the conditions – avoid/minimise creating dust.
- Not land where permission has been denied by the owner, or in other prohibited areas.
- Not climb over fences - use the gates.
- Not litter and to take your litter home.
- Not overfly prohibited areas.
- Not land in stocked or cropped paddocks.
- Be aware of transmission of stock or fauna disease, especially if landing on farms.
- Minimise any environmental damage; be particularly careful with inadvertent transplant of seeds and use established paths or tracks wherever possible.
- Beware of power lines - they may be strung between tree lines; they are located near most buildings.
- Limit the number of vehicles using access roads where possible.
- Treat all members of the public well and with respect, inform them of your sport and encourage their interest.
- Obey all conditions and requests from landowners, including Council Officers.
- Fly only at sites for which you hold the relevant rating. The only exception is that a Safety Officer present on the day may rule that conditions at the time are suitable for a pilot who holds a rating only one level below the rating normally required.
- If you are a visiting pilot you must contact a local pilot to obtain the latest information regarding access procedures, hazards and any other protocol pertaining to that site, and you must agree to abide by the above code of conduct before flying in [REGION]