

Hon Phil Twyford

MP for Te Atatu

Minister for Economic Development

Minister of Transport

Minister for Urban Development



Allen Reynolds

fyi-request-12332-c3c14876@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Allen Reynolds

I refer to your request dated 28 February 2020, pursuant to the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), asking:

In July 2019, at the 'unveiling' of the Government's "Taking Flight" plan, Minister of Transport Phil Twyford was reported as saying "77,000 drones are in use nationally" – source below

Firstly – did Minister of Transport Phil Twyford say this?

What was the source for the number "77,000"?

What was the definition of "drones"? – the correct term is RPAS; the types are highly varied

In the context of the event, was Minister of Transport Phil Twyford referring to just multirotor RPAS?

What is the latest total? Source?

I can confirm that I did say "77,000 drones are in use nationally" on 17 July 2019 during my release of the *Taking Flight: an aviation system for the automated age* (Taking Flight) paper.

The source for this number was the Drone Benefit Study, which was jointly commissioned by the Ministry of Transport (the Ministry) and the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment (MBIE) to support the Taking Flight paper. The study is freely available at:

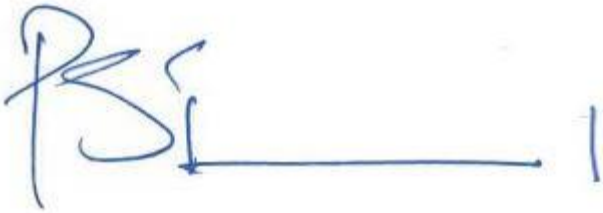
<https://www.transport.govt.nz/air/unmanned-aircraft-systems-or-drones/drone-benefit-study/>

The methodology for determining the potential number of drones in New Zealand can be found on page eight of this report. I acknowledge that at the time of the release, I used the approximate number of "77,000", however, the full report and accompanying infographics were released at the same time for anyone seeking specific information.

During the event, when I used the term drones, I was referring to all types of aircraft which operate without an on-board pilot, including consumer-grade multi-rotor drones. I understand that the term "drone" may not always be the appropriate term for all applications. However, in an effort to build public acceptance and understanding of the benefits of the technology, I believe it is important to use terminology which is familiar and recognised by a wide range of people.

At the moment, the 77,600 estimate is the latest information we have on drone numbers. Last year, my officials at the Ministry, along with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the MBIE commissioned a new survey to be carried out on drone users in New Zealand. This survey will provide up-to-date information on how many drones are in use in New Zealand, both for commercial and recreational purposes. It will also provide insight into how these drones are distributed across the country, and what their capabilities are. I understand that this report should be released in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Twyford', followed by a horizontal line and a vertical tick mark at the end.

Hon Phil Twyford
Minister for Economic Development