



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.

SI/772/1060

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

55 km north-west of Lismore, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. 1700 feet	Date 13.11.77	Time (Local) 0730 hours	Zone ESuT
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA28R-200	Registration VH-CUI	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 7.4.77
Certificate of Registration issued to Air Training Pty. Ltd., Hangar 276, Bankstown Airport, New South Wales	Operator Chieftain Aviation Pty. Ltd., Hangar 276, Bankstown Airport, New South Wales	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Lismore	Time of departure 0713 hours	Next point of intended landing Dalby	Purpose of flight Travel	Class of operation Private
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Ronald John SMALL	Pilot	32	Private	7	322	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Petra Beryl Jean KERMA	Passenger	Fatal	Paul Roy NEIDECK	Passenger	Fatal
Raymond KERMA	Passenger	Fatal			

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

On the day prior to the accident, the pilot flew the aircraft from Bankstown to Lismore. He had planned to continue the flight to Dalby and Warwick that day but, on reaching Lismore, decided to remain there overnight. He refuelled the aircraft to capacity at Lismore.

At 0540 hours on the next morning, the pilot telephoned the Brisbane Briefing Office and obtained a meteorological briefing, based on the relevant area forecast, for the Lismore/Warwick/Dalby route. The area forecast indicated that, on the coastal fringes, cloud was expected to be scattered cumulus, base 2500 feet, tops 5000 feet with occasional tops to 10000 feet, and isolated rain showers. The sky was expected to be clear west of the ranges. The pilot then notified details of a plan for a flight from Lismore to Dalby, thence to Warwick and return to Lismore. He did not hold an instrument rating and his plan details indicated that the flight would be conducted in accordance with the Visual Flight Rules (VFR), cruising below 5000 feet and a Sartime of 1900 hours was nominated. The aircraft subsequently departed from Lismore and the pilot made a routine departure report radio to Brisbane Flight Service Unit at 0713 hours. No further communications were received from the aircraft. Experienced pilots operating at Lismore at about this time noted that the weather conditions from the west to the north of Lismore appeared to be unsuitable for VFR flight with scattered rain showers and extensive low cloud.

At a time consistent with the expected progress of VH-CUI, an aircraft was heard, but not observed, to approach and fly over Kyogle from a southerly direction. There was extensive low cloud and scattered drizzle at Kyogle at that time. Beyond Kyogle, the track to Warwick and Dalby entails a crossing of mountain ranges with peaks rising above 3000 feet. Several persons saw an aircraft flying over the rising terrain leading to the mountain ranges some 20 km. north-west of Kyogle. The aircraft was flying very low just below cloud and it subsequently appeared to enter cloud. The engine noise was normal. Shortly afterwards, the engine noise of an aircraft flying low was heard by another person further to the north-west and this was followed by the noise of an impact. The engine noise continued for a short period and, following the sound of a second impact, it ceased. At this time there was overcast cloud in the area with light drizzle and all the hills were obscured by low cloud. The wreckage of the aircraft was located by ground search on the same day.

The aircraft first struck trees on a ridge while on a westerly heading in substantially level flight. Portion of the right wing was torn off and the aircraft, apparently out of control, crashed into the thickly timbered valley immediately west of the ridge. Detailed examination of the wreckage revealed no evidence of any defect or malfunction which might have contributed to the accident. There was no fire.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that the pilot continued the flight into weather conditions in which he was not able to maintain the visual references necessary for him to ensure adequate terrain clearance.

Approved for publication		(G.V. Hughes) Delegate of the Secretary	Date 13.1.1981
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