1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Eighteen kilometres south of Wilkurra Homestead, N.S.W.

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model: Cessna 310H
Certificate of Registration issued to: H.M. Champion de Crespigny, P.O. Box 354, Hawthorn, Victoria
Regisration Certificate of Airworthiness: VH-WRG Valid from 8.6.65 to 7.6.74
Operator: G.H. Antcliffe, 8 Nethercote Drive, Mount Waverley, Victoria
Degree of damage to aircraft: Destroyed
Other property damaged: Nil
Defects discovered: Nil

3. THE FLIGHT

Time of departure: 1046 hours
Next point of intended landing: Moorabbin
Purpose of flight: Travel
Class of operation: Private

4. THE CREW

Name: George Henderson ANTCLIFFE
Status: Pilot
Age: 38
Class of licence: Commercial
Hours on type: 129
Total hours: 974
Degree of injury: Fatal

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

Name: Albert Alexander McAULAY
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal
Name: Joan Lilian McAULAY
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal
Name: Helen Elizabeth ANTCLIFFE
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal
Name: James Donald THOMSON
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal
Name: Daphne May THOMSON
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

Prior to departure the pilot obtained a forecast which indicated that the weather conditions would be suitable for the flight. After completing the pre-flight inspection and submitting a flight plan, the pilot, together with his passengers, boarded the aircraft and departed in fine weather conditions. The pilot passed by radio a departure time of 1046 hours and an estimate of 1134 hours for his first position reporting point which was Franks Plains. Although a sight-seeing detour via Menindee Lakes had been discussed by members of the party, the estimate for Franks Plains was consistent with the flight planned time interval for the direct route. The departure message was the last known transmission from the aircraft. It is not possible to say with certainty which route was flown although, at an appropriate time an aircraft fitting the Cessna 310's description was seen flying over Munka Station (between Broken Hill and Menindee Lakes) heading some 37 degrees to port of the flight planned heading and towards Menindee. The weather conditions along the route consisted of increasing low cloud south-east from Broken Hill towards an area of unstable weather associated with a low pressure trough lying across the aircraft's track. As a result of the aircraft's failure to report position at Franks Plains the uncertainty phase of search and rescue procedures was declared. When no further information was obtained the alert phase was declared and then ultimately the distress phase. After five days of intensive air and ground search, involving 68 fixed wing aircraft and one helicopter, the aircraft wreckage was located among trees some 70 kilometres north-east of its planned route. This position was consistent with the aircraft having diverted via the Menindee Lakes area. Parts of the tailplane were found in an area 550 metres from the main wreckage. Examination of these parts revealed evidence of failure as a result of in-flight loads being experienced in excess of their ultimate structural strength. There was no evidence of any pre-existing structural deficiency in the failed components. The nature and direction of the tailplane failures show they could only have occurred in a grossly abnormal condition of flight such as a complete loss of control. Very active thunderstorms were reported in the area at about the estimated time of the accident. These could have induced a loss of control arising either from pilot disorientation in cloud or an upset in severe turbulence.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was an encounter with severe weather conditions in which the pilot was unable to retain control of the aircraft.

(Frank E. Yeend)
Delegate of the Director-General of Civil Aviation
Date: 28.2.75