



AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

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

AS/743/1003

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

● kilometres west of Mud Islands, Port Phillip Bay, Victoria	Height a.m.s.l. Sea level	Date 5.1.74	Time (Local) 1628 hours	Zone ESuT
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 172H	Registration VH-KWN	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 25.11.66
Certificate of Registration issued to W. F. Suhr, P. O. Box 94, Cheltenham, Victoria.	Operator Peninsula Air Services, 13 Wells Street, Frankston, Victoria.	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
Defects discovered		Other property damaged Nil
Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point ● Moorabbin Airport	Time of departure 1512 hours	Next point of intended landing Moorabbin Airport	Purpose of flight Aerial Photography	Class of operation Aerial Work
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Phillip Sydney SUTTON	Pilot	25	Commercial	152	395	Minor

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
● Russell William SKELTON	Passenger	Serious	Anthony John FEDER	Passenger	Serious

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The flight was arranged to enable press photographs to be taken of Republic RC3 "Sea-Bee" amphibious aircraft VH-MJO while it was engaged on a shark spotting beach patrol. As the left front seat of VH-KWN was the most suitable from which to take photographs, it was occupied by the photographer, the pilot occupied the right front control seat and the second passenger the left rear seat. The two aircraft flew in company over bayside beaches for some time with VH-MJO at an altitude of about 500 feet and VH-KWN slightly behind and about 200 feet higher. It was necessary for the pilot of VH-KWN to use less than normal engine power and to fly with 10 to 15 degrees of flap extended to avoid overtaking the other aircraft.

As no sharks had been observed near the beaches it was decided to proceed towards the Mud Islands and a school of sharks was subsequently sighted in this area. Attempts were made to obtain photographs of VH-MJO with sharks in the background but these were unsuccessful. It was then decided that VH-KWN would descend to 500 feet to photograph the school of sharks, while VH-MJO remained clear of the other aircraft.

The pilot of VH-KWN extended flap to 30 degrees and reduced speed from about 70 knots to 55-60 knots, using just sufficient engine power to maintain 500 feet altitude. Two left hand racecourse orbits were flown around the sharks and, during the third orbit, while on a north-easterly heading, the pilot had a discussion with the photographer regarding the positioning of the aircraft and then looked out to the right to check the location of the other aircraft. As a further left turn was initiated the pilot looked at the aircraft instruments and noticed that the altitude had decreased to 300 feet and that the airspeed was also low. The port wing dropped and the stall warning was heard to operate. Despite the initial application of corrective aileron, and the subsequent application of right rudder, forward stick and engine power, the aircraft lost height rapidly and struck the water in a nose down, port wing low attitude.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the pilot gave insufficient attention to the maintenance of a safe airspeed and as a result the aircraft stalled at a height which was insufficient for recovery to be effected.

Approved for publication

(Frank E. Yeend)
Delegate of the Secretary

Date

6.5.1975

DEFINITIONS

ACCIDENT - An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all those persons have disembarked and in which

- (a) any person suffers death or serious injury as a result of being in or upon the aircraft or by direct contact with the aircraft or anything attached to the aircraft; or
- (b) the aircraft suffers substantial damage.

FATAL INJURY - Any injury which results in death within 30 days.

SERIOUS INJURY - Any injury other than a fatal injury which

- (a) requires hospitalisation for more than 48 hours, commencing within seven days from the date the injury was received; or
- (b) results in a fracture of any bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes or nose); or
- (c) involves lacerations which cause severe haemorrhages, nerve, muscle or tendon damage; or
- (d) involves injury to any internal organ; or
- (e) involves second or third degree burns, or any burns affecting more than five percent of the body surface.

MINOR INJURY - Any injury other than as defined under "Fatal Injury" or "Serious Injury".

DESTROYED - Consumed by fire, demolished or damaged beyond repair.

SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE - Damage or structural failure which adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft and which would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component. The following types of damage are specifically excluded: engine failure, damage limited to an engine, bent fairings or cowling, dented skin, small punctured holes in the skin or fabric, taxi-ing damage to propeller blades, damage to tyres, engine accessories, brakes, or wingtips.

MINOR DAMAGE - Damage other than as defined under "Destroyed" or "Substantial Damage".