1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

4 miles west south-west of Narromine, N.S.W.

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model: Piper PA28/180 "Cherokee"
Registration: VH-POK
Certificate of Airworthiness: Valid from 22.7.66, Valid to 21.7.75

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point: Narromine
Time of departure: 1920
Next point of intended landing: Condobolin
Purpose of flight: Travel
Class of operation: Private

4. THE CREW

Name: James Wilton MARSHMAN
Status: Pilot
Age: 40
Class of licence: Private
Hours on type: 93
Total hours: 101
Degree of injury: Fatal

Name: Conrad Leslie CAREY
Status: Pilot
Age: 42
Class of licence: Private
Hours on type: 127
Total hours: 262
Degree of injury: Fatal

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

Name: Joseph Carl WALSH
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal

Name: Henry MAHON
Status: Passenger
Degree of injury: Fatal

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The four occupants of the aircraft were members of Condobolin Aero Club and each held a Private Pilot Licence. Earlier in the day they had flown from Condobolin to Narromine to take part in a flying competition. Four other club members had also flown to Narromine in another Club aircraft. A flight plan covering both the outward and the return flight of VH-POK had been submitted to Dubbo Flight Service Unit by telephone indicating that Walsh would be the pilot-in-command. Walsh had occupied the left front seat on the outward flight with Carey in the right front seat. For the return flight Marshman occupied the left front seat with Carey again in the right front seat. The aircraft was fitted with full dual controls. From the evidence available it was not possible to determine who was the pilot-in-command.

When the two aircraft departed from Narromine for the return flight there were isolated thunderstorms in the area. The pilot of the other aircraft took off 1½ minutes ahead of VH-POK, made a routine departure call to the Dubbo Flight Service Unit, and completed the flight to Condobolin without difficulty. He later reported that, although he had made a diversion soon after take-off to avoid light rain showers, there were no storms at that time in the vicinity of the accident site. No radio communications were received from VH-POK either on the Flight Service frequency or the Narromine Club frequency. The wreckage of the aircraft was found next morning in a large open field about four miles from Narromine and one mile to the right of the direct track. The aircraft had struck the ground in a steep nose-down, left wing-down attitude and bounced a distance of thirty feet before coming to rest.

At a prize-giving ceremony held in the clubrooms at the conclusion of the flying competition drinks had been served but Marshman drank only lemonade. Post-mortem examinations disclosed that in the case of Marshman, who had occupied the left control seat, the level of blood alcohol was nil, but in the case of the occupant of the right control seat, Carey, the level was such that, had he been pilot-in-command, his ability to so act would have been impaired. The examinations also disclosed that the occupants of the rear seats had consumed alcohol.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

From the evidence available it has not been possible to determine the cause of the accident.