

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198701609**

Boeing 767

13 May 1987

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NOTE: All air safety occurrences reported to the ATSB are categorised and recorded. For a detailed explanation on Category definitions please refer to the ATSB website at www.atsb.gov.au.

Occurrence Number: 198701609
Location: 7 km South of Essendon VIC
Date: 13 May 1987
Highest Injury Level: Nil
Injuries:

Occurrence Type: Incident

Time: N/K

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0

Aircraft Details: Boeing 767
Registration: ZK-NBC
Serial Number:
Operation Type: International Regular Public
 Transport
Damage Level: None
Departure Point: Wellington NZ
Departure Time: N/K
Destination: Melbourne VIC

Approved for Release: 10-Jun-87

Circumstances:

The aircraft was radar-vectorred for an approach to Melbourne (Tullamarine) Runway 34. At the time the weather was overcast, with scattered cloud down to 1000 feet above ground level. Cloud and rain affected flight visibility and interfered with the radar display of aircraft position. The flight crew reported they were "visual" when at 2000 feet and about 17 kilometres (9 nautical miles [nm]) south east of Melbourne. The Approach Controller advised the flight of its radar position in relation to Melbourne and requested confirmation that the crew had Runway 34 in sight. When this was acknowledged, instructions were given for the flight to take up a heading of 320 degrees; to intercept the extended centre line of Runway 34 from this heading; and to make a visual approach. Shortly afterwards the Tower Controller at Essendon Airport (5 nm south east of Melbourne) called the Melbourne Approach Controller and reported that a heavy aircraft was on approach for (Runway 35) Essendon. The Approach Controller called the aircraft, requested its present altitude and, on being advised it was "through fifteen hundred" (feet), instructed the flight to climb to 2000 feet and turn left onto a heading of 320 degrees. He also advised that the aircraft was 7 nm south east of Melbourne and still two miles to the right of the runway centre line. Shortly afterwards, the flight crew reported they were at 2000 feet and had "Runway 34 Melbourne in sight". The aircraft was then cleared for a straight in approach and for transfer to the tower frequency. The aircraft landed without further incident. Subsequent readout of the radar recording and the airborne Flight Data Recorder indicated that when the initial clearance for a visual approach was given the aircraft turned onto the required heading of 320 degrees, but very shortly afterwards turned right, in line with Runway 35 at Essendon. The flight crew have confirmed that they initially turned towards Essendon but detected their error at about the time the Approach Controller instructed them to turn (back) to 320 degrees and to climb. The Flight Data Recorder showed that the aircraft reached a minimum altitude of 1280 feet (above mean sea level) about 6 nm from Melbourne. The aircraft

then began to gain altitude. There have been a number of instances where Essendon has been mistaken for Melbourne. The two airports are in close proximity and have similar runway configurations. In this instance the flight crew members were not very familiar with the Melbourne area or with the approach to Runway 34. The visibility was poor and a visual approach was undertaken from a point about 9 nm from the runway. The Fentons Hill VOR (to the north of Melbourne) was not utilised to assist the crew with interception of the Runway 34 extended centre line.

Reccomendations:

It is recommended that consideration be given to the following

- 1 Operators briefing the relevant flight crews on the real possibility of misidentifying the two airports.
- 2 Operators instructing flight crew to make full use of available radio aids on visual approaches to Melbourne.
- 3 The Department of Aviation providing visual and/or radio aids to assist ready identification of Runway 34, such as sequenced strobe lights leading to the threshold and/or an instrument approach facility to the south of the airport.