

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA-BUREAU OF AIR SAFETY INVESTIGATION
 AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

REFERENCE NO.
 SI/812/1036

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Barrington Tops area, N.S.W.		Elevation: Unknown	
Date: 9.8.81	Time: 1940 hours	Zone: EST	

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model: Cessna 210M	Registration: VH-MDX
Certificate of Airworthiness: Issued on 3.2.78	
Certificate of Registration Issued to:	Operator:
Degree of Damage to Aircraft: Presumed destroyed	Other Property Damaged: Nil reported
Defects discovered: Aircraft not located	

3. THE FLIGHT

Departure Point: Coolangatta	Time of departure: 1701 hours
Destination: Bankstown	
Purpose of flight: Travel	Class of Operation: Private

4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of Licence	Hours on Type	Total Hours	Degree of Injury
	Pilot		Senior Commercial	28	3412	Presumed fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (ALL PASSENGERS AND PERSONS INJURED ON GROUND)

Name	Status	Degree of Injury
	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal
	Passenger	Presumed fatal

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The aircraft was engaged in a flight from Proserpine to Bankstown with an intermediate stop at Coolangatta. On arrival at Coolangatta the aircraft was refuelled and the pilot attended the Briefing Office, where he was provided with copies of the relevant weather forecasts for the remaining part of the flight. These forecasts indicated a strong west-southwesterly airflow over northern New South Wales, with considerable low level cloud to the west of the mountains but only scattered strato-cumulus or cumulus up to 6000 feet to the east and over the coast. The freezing level was expected to be between 4000 and 7000 feet above mean sea level, and moderate icing was forecast in cloud above that level. A SIGMET (forecast of significant weather which may affect aircraft safety) was current, indicating occasional severe turbulence existed below 12,000 feet to the east of the mountains.

The pilot held a current Class 3 Instrument Rating, which entitled him to make the flight under the Instrument Flight Rules (IFR). The aircraft was also approved for IFR operations, but not for flight in known or forecast icing conditions, as it was not equipped with suitable airframe de-icing equipment. The pilot elected to conduct the flight in accordance with the visual meteorological conditions at night (Night VMC) procedures. He submitted a flight plan which indicated he intended to track along the coast to Taree, then inland via Craven, Singleton and Mt. McQuoid in order to avoid controlled and military restricted areas surrounding Williamtown.

After departing Coolangatta the flight proceeded without recorded incident to Taree. At this point the pilot reported to Sydney Flight Service Centre that he was cruising at 8000 feet and estimating overhead Singleton at 1930 hours EST. At the suggestion of Flight Service and with the agreement of the pilot, Flight Service and Sydney Air Traffic Control then began to co-ordinate a clearance to allow the aircraft to continue to track, more directly, via the coast and transit the Williamtown military areas, however this clearance was delayed because of uncertainty regarding the amount of cloud and general weather conditions to the south of Williamtown. Some 8 minutes after passing Taree the pilot advised that he would continue on his planned track rather than hold to the north of Williamtown pending the issuing of a clearance. He subsequently reported when passing the Craven position, and advised that the aircraft was experiencing "considerable turbulence now and quite a lot of downdraught". Five minutes later, at 1924 hours EST, the pilot reported that the aircraft had entered cloud. He requested a clearance to climb to 10,000 feet and shortly afterwards advised that the primary flight instruments, i.e. the artificial horizon and the gyroscopically controlled direction indicator had failed.

Search and Rescue procedures were initiated and at 1928 hours the aircraft was identified by radar. At this time the aircraft was near the Barrington Tops, some 58 km north of Singleton, and about 40 km northwest of the planned track. This information was relayed to the pilot, who advised that he was having difficulty in climbing to 8500 feet. At 1934 hours he indicated that the aircraft was no longer in cloud, however it had accumulated "a fair amount of ice". He continued to report strong turbulence and further ice accretion, and indicated that the aircraft was descending rapidly. The last recorded transmission from the aircraft was at 1939 hours, when the pilot advised the aircraft was at five thousand feet. Radar contact with the aircraft was also lost at this time.

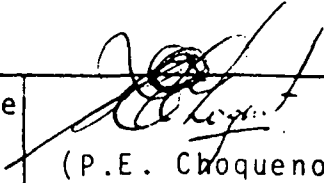
6. RELEVANT EVENTS

An extensive air and ground search was immediately commenced and continued for 10 days without success. Subsequently the search has been reactivated on a number of occasions in response to reports of wreckage being sighted. However, no trace of the aircraft or its occupants has been found.

7. RELEVANT FACTORS

The cause of the accident has not been determined but severe turbulence, icing and a failure of the aircraft's primary flight instruments are probable factors.

Approved for publication under the
provisions of Air Navigation
Regulation 283(1)


(P.E. Choquenot)

Director

Date:

28.9.83