

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198200063**

Cessna 210/5

30 September 1982

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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.

aircraft and circling over one of the towns in order to positively establish the position of the aircraft. Had the towns been Atherton and Mareeba the pilot should have been able to sight the lights of Cairns in less than 10 minutes, however no alteration to the assigned heading was given until 1859, at which time the pilot was told to orbit. Discussion took place between the FSU operator and the SOC on the possibility that the aircraft had crossed the coast and was over the sea. The SOC instituted the Distress Phase of Search and Rescue procedures at 1900 hours and at 1905 he gave instructions for the pilot to take up a westerly heading. Shortly afterwards the pilot established communications with Cairns Tower. During the following 90 minutes the SOC relayed numerous messages to the aircraft through Cairns Tower; other aircraft conducted an airborne search and the Cairns meteorological station radar was activated in efforts to locate the aircraft. At 1945 hours the pilot confirmed that the aircraft was over water and the aircraft apparently remained over water for the remainder of the flight. The engine subsequently failed from fuel exhaustion and the pilot advised he was descending over a "fairly smooth sea". The final transmission from the aircraft was made shortly before 2037 hours, at which time it was passing through 400 feet. An intensive search was commenced the following morning and continued for several days, however no trace of the aircraft or its occupants has been found.

Significant Factors:

1. Adverse weather conditions (smoke), increasing difficulties with visual navigation.
2. Radio navigation equipment not functioning correctly.
3. The pilot did not maintain an accurate navigation log.
4. The pilot became uncertain of his position.
5. Inadequate navigation assistance was provided to the pilot by the responsible operational control facility.