Australian Government
Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Collision with terrain involving Beechcraft B200C, VH-PUY

near Normanton Airport, Queensland, on 6 February 2026

ATSB Transport Safety Report
Aviation Occurrence Investigation
AO-2026-060
Preliminary – 1 April 2026

Cover photo: Jonathan Williams

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Preliminary report

This preliminary report details factual information established in the investigation's early evidence collection phase, and has been prepared to provide timely information to the industry and public. Preliminary reports contain no analysis or findings, which will be detailed in the investigation's final report. The information contained in this preliminary report is released in accordance with section 25 of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003*.

The occurrence

On the afternoon of 6 February 2026, the pilot of a Beechcraft B200C, registered VH-PUY and operated by Machjet International, planned to conduct a ferry flight[1] from Cairns to Normanton, followed by a return passenger transport flight[2] from Normanton to Doomadgee, then ferry the aircraft back to Cairns (all locations in Queensland). The flights were conducted under the instrument flight rules (IFR),[3] using callsign Machflight 313.

The aircraft took off from Cairns Airport at about 1318 local time and arrived at Normanton Airport at 1431. At 1455, the aircraft took off from runway 32 at Normanton Airport, with the pilot and 4 passengers on board, arriving at Doomadgee Airport at 1532. The aircraft then departed Doomadgee at 1853, and landed on runway 14 at Normanton Airport at 1932, where the pilot shut down the aircraft and the passengers disembarked.

At 1945:47, the pilot radioed Brisbane Centre air traffic control[4] and advised they were taxiing at Normanton for Cairns on runway 32. The controller responded that there was no reported IFR traffic and issued the pilot a transponder code. The controller then confirmed that the pilot was aware of the significant weather advisory (SIGMET)[5] 'V03', which was for frequent thunderstorms in an area that included Normanton Airport (see the section titled *Meteorological conditions*).

As the pilot had activated the airport lighting during approach, at 1947, a recorded message on the aerodrome frequency response unit was broadcast on the common traffic advisory frequency (CTAF)[6]: 'Normanton airport airfield lighting 10 minutes remaining'.

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1 Ferry flights were conducted under Part 91 of the Civil Aviation Safety Regulations (CASR).

2 Passenger transport flights were conducted under Part 135 of the CASR.

3 Instrument flight rules (IFR): a set of regulations that permit the pilot to operate an aircraft in instrument meteorological conditions (IMC), which have much lower weather minimums than visual flight rules (VFR). Procedures and training are significantly more complex as a pilot must demonstrate competency in IMC conditions while controlling the aircraft solely by reference to instruments. IFR-capable aircraft have greater equipment and maintenance requirements.

4 Brisbane centre: Brisbane Centre air traffic control is one of 2 major air traffic control centres – the other being in Melbourne. From Brisbane Centre, Airservices manages the airspace over the northern half of Australia, representing around 5% of the world's total airspace. Brisbane Centre's flight information region (FIR) neighbours include Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, New Zealand, and the USA.

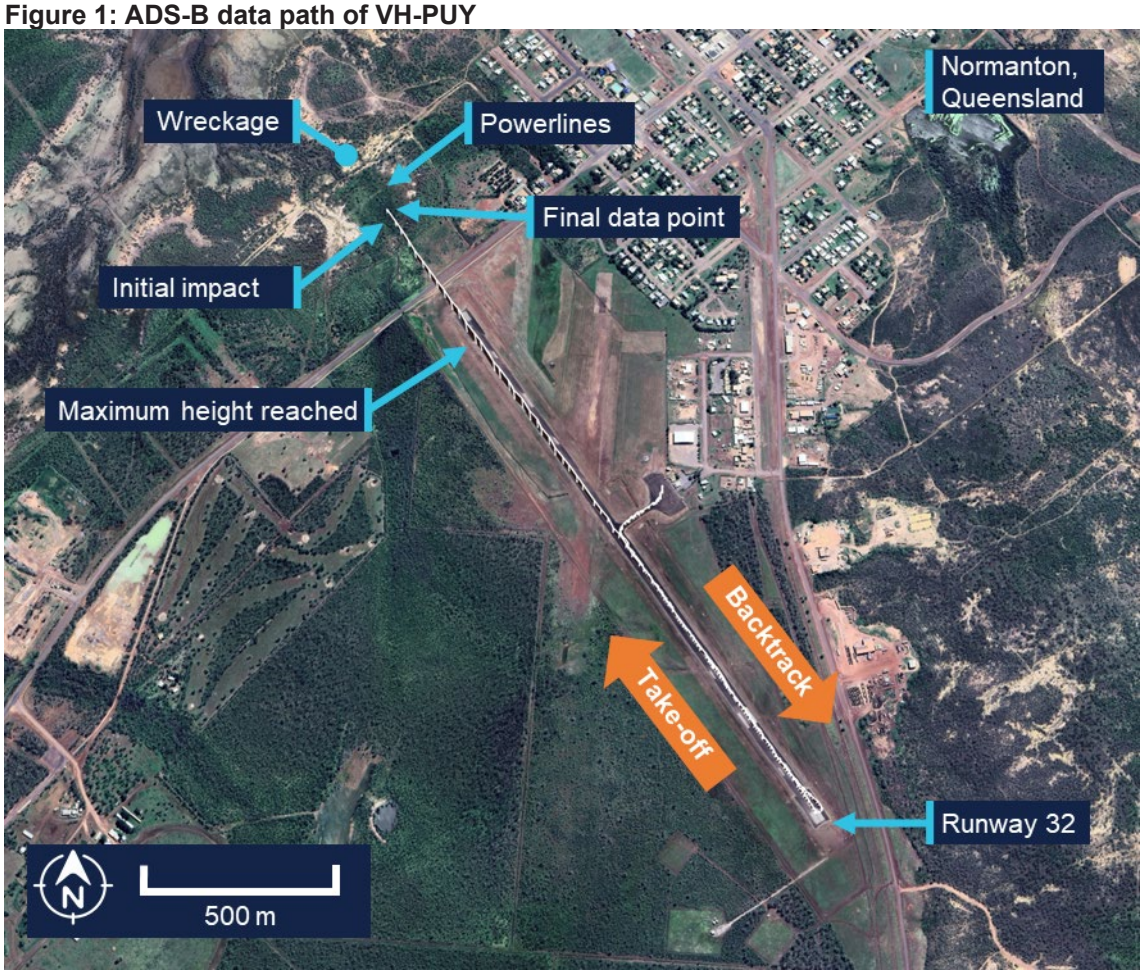
5 Significant meteorological information (SIGMET): a weather advisory service that provides the location, extent, expected movement and change in intensity of potentially hazardous (significant) or extreme meteorological conditions that are dangerous to most aircraft, such as thunderstorms or severe turbulence.

6 Common Traffic Advisory Frequency (CTAF): a designated frequency on which pilots make positional broadcasts when operating in the vicinity of a non-controlled airport or within a broadcast area.

At 1948, the pilot broadcast on the CTAF that they were ‘entering and backtracking runway 14’. There were no further recorded transmissions from the pilot. The aircraft then entered and backtracked runway 32.

Based on recorded ADS-B[7] data, the aircraft commenced take-off from runway 32 at 1950. The aircraft accelerated and climbed to a maximum height of about 150 ft above ground level prior to entering a descent (Figure 1).

Figure 1: ADS-B data path of VH-PUY



Source: Google Earth, annotated by the ATSB

The aircraft impacted a small tree, 360 m from the end of the runway, prior to impacting the ground in a wings-level attitude. Following the ground impact, the aircraft slid beneath powerlines and while there was no indication that the aircraft struck the wires, it triggered a local power outage. While sliding along the ground, the aircraft commenced a gradual right yaw,[8] impacting trees and breaking up in the process before coming to rest in flood water 580 m beyond the end of the runway.

[7] Automatic dependent surveillance–broadcast (ADS-B): a surveillance technology in which an aircraft determines its position via satellite navigation and periodically broadcasts it, enabling it to be tracked.

[8] Yawing: the motion of an aircraft about its vertical or normal axis.

At 1951:28, the final ADS-B position transmitted from the aircraft indicated that it:

- was 370 m beyond the end of runway 32 (after the initial impact with the tree)
- had a ground speed of 162 kt
- had descended from the previous transmitted position to that point at 1,100 fpm.

The pilot was fatally injured. A post-impact fire ensued and the aircraft was destroyed.

Context

Pilot information

The pilot held a Commercial Pilot Licence (Aeroplane), a class 1 aviation medical certificate, a command instrument rating and the appropriate endorsements and ratings for the aircraft. The pilot had accrued 1,721 hours total flight time, 381 of which were on the B200 aircraft type. The pilot had completed 191 hours on the aircraft type in the last 90 days, with 116 of those hours as pilot in command.

Aircraft information

VH-PUY was a Beechcraft B200C twin-engine turboprop aircraft, manufactured in the United States in 1981 as serial number BL 41, and first registered in Australia in 1987. The aircraft had retractable landing gear, a pressurised cabin and a T-tail horizontal stabiliser. It was powered by 2 Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-42 engines and Hartzell HC-D4N-3A propellers. The aircraft avionics suite included Garmin G600 electronic flight instruments. According to the maintenance release, at the start of the day's flying on 6 February 2026, the aircraft had accumulated a total time of 23,708.4 hours in service. There were no outstanding defects documented on the maintenance release.

Meteorological conditions

Area forecast

The Bureau of Meteorology grid point wind and temperature forecast, issued at 1604 and valid from 1900 on 6 February at 1,000 ft above mean sea level (AMSL) in the area including Normanton, was wind from 050° at 8 kt and temperature of 27°C.

The graphical area forecast (cloud heights AMSL) issued at 1421 and valid from 1500 to 2100 included the following information:

- visibility greater than 10 km and cloud:[9]
  - broken stratocumulus with bases at 1,500 ft and tops at 3,000 ft over land from 1900
  - broken cumulus/stratocumulus with bases at 3,000 ft and tops above 10,000 ft.
- visibility reducing to 2,000 m in isolated to scattered showers of rain associated with:
  - isolated[10] towering cumulus with bases at 3,000 ft and tops above 10,000 ft
  - broken stratus with bases 800 ft and tops 3,000 ft
  - broken cumulus/stratocumulus with bases at 3,000 ft and tops above 10,000 ft.

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[9] Cloud cover: in aviation, cloud cover is reported using words that denote the extent of the cover – 'few' indicates that up to a quarter of the sky is covered, 'scattered' indicates that cloud is covering between a quarter and a half of the sky, 'broken' indicates that more than half to almost all the sky is covered, and 'overcast' indicates that all the sky is covered.

[10] Isolated thunderstorms and/or cloud: individual features are affecting, or forecast to affect, up to 50% of an area.

- visibility reducing to 1,000 m in isolated to occasional[11] thunderstorms with rain associated with:
  - isolated cumulonimbus with bases at 3,000 ft and tops above 10,000 ft
  - broken stratus with bases at 600 ft and tops at 3,000 ft.

The forecast also included SIGMET V02 valid from 1730–1930, for frequent[12] thunderstorms with tops at flight level 550 moving south-west at 15 kt in a region that included Normanton.

That SIGMET was reissued at 1852 as SIGMET V03, valid from 1930–2130 with no change in detail from V02.

Aerodrome forecast

The aerodrome forecast[13] (all cloud heights above the aerodrome elevation of 73 ft) for Normanton issued at 1630 and valid from 1800 to 0600 (on 7 February) included the following information relevant to the accident flight:

- Wind from 350° at 8 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, light showers of rain and scattered cloud at 3,000 ft.
- A probability for periods up to 60 minutes between 1800 and 0300 (on 7 February) of:
  - variable winds at 20 kt gusting to 30 kt
  - visibility 1,000 m in thunderstorms and rain
  - broken cloud at 800 ft and scattered cumulonimbus clouds with bases at 3,000 ft.
- From 1800–2100, temperature 30°C and QNH[14] 1,008 hPa.

Aerodrome weather observations

Weather observations (all cloud heights above aerodrome elevation) at Normanton Airport between 1900 and 1956 included the following routine weather reports (METAR)[15] and special reports (SPECI)[16].

- METAR at 1900: wind from 360° at 4 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, light showers of rain. Cloud broken at 6,200 ft, broken cloud at 7,400 ft, overcast at 8,200 ft. Temperature 31°C, dewpoint 26°C, QNH 1,010 hPa. No rain in the last 10 minutes, 0.2 mm since 0900 local time. Distant lightning detected to the north.
- METAR at 1930: wind from 360° at 5 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, scattered cloud at 6,700 ft, broken cloud at 7,900 ft, overcast at 9,300 ft. Temperature 31°C, dewpoint 26°C, QNH 1,011 hPa. No rain in the last 10 minutes, 0.2 mm since 0900 local time. Distant lightning detected to the north-east, east, south-east and north-west.

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[11] Occasional: well-separated features affecting, or are forecast to affect, greater than 50% but not more than 75% of an area.

[12] Frequent thunderstorms: an area of thunderstorms with little or no separation between adjacent storms and covering more than 75% of the affected area.

[13] Aerodrome forecast (TAF): a statement of meteorological conditions expected for a specific period of time in the airspace within a radius of 5 NM (9 km) of the aerodrome reference point.

[14] QNH: the altimeter barometric pressure subscale setting used to indicate the height above mean sea level.

[15] METAR: a routine report of meteorological conditions at an aerodrome. METAR are normally issued on the hour and half hour.

[16] A SPECI is a special report of meteorological conditions, issued when one or more elements meet specified criteria significant to aviation. SPECI is also used to identify reports of observations recorded 10 minutes following an improvement (in visibility, weather or cloud) to above SPECI conditions.

- SPECI at 1940: wind from 350° at 19 kt, visibility greater than 10 km, few cloud at 1,800 ft, scattered cloud at 4,700 ft, broken cloud at 6,700 ft. Temperature 27°C, dewpoint 22°C, QNH 1,011 hPa. No rain in the last 10 minutes, 0.2 mm since 0900 local time. Distant lightning detected in the north, north-east, east, south-east and north-west.
- SPECI at 1952: wind from 020° at 16 kt gusting to 26 kt, visibility 7,000 m, thunderstorms in the vicinity, light showers of rain with scattered cloud at 800 ft, broken at 2,000 ft, broken at 4,800 ft. Temperature 25°C, dewpoint 24°C, QNH 1,012 hPa. 0.4 mm of rain in the last 10 minutes, 0.6 mm total rainfall since 0900 local time. Thunderstorms to the north and north-east.
- SPECI at 1956: wind from 030° at 15 kt gusting to 25 kt, visibility 5,000 m and thunderstorms in the vicinity. Temperature 25°C, dewpoint 24°C, QNH 1,013 hPa. 0.4 mm of rain in the last 10 minutes, 0.6 mm total rainfall since 0900 local time. Thunderstorms to the north and north-east.

Figure 2 shows the Bureau of Meteorology weather radar, 2 minutes prior to the accident, with light to moderate rain rate detected to the north-west of Normanton.

Figure 2: Radar imagery 2 minutes prior to the accident

Source: Bureau of Meteorology, annotated by the ATSB

Table 1 shows the one-minute weather data from the automatic weather station at Normanton Airport from when the aircraft landed at 1932 to 2010. The data shows that when the aircraft landed at Normanton, the wind was northerly at 5 kt, gusting to 6 kt. As the pilot prepared the aircraft and taxied out, the wind veered to the east-north-east and increased in average and gust speed. The maximum wind speed and gust occurred at 1941. By 2009, the wind average and gust speeds had reduced below 10 kt.

Table 1: One-minute weather data, Normanton Airport

Local time	Rainfall in 1 minute	Temperature (°C)	Wind direction (°M)	Wind speed (kt)	Gust speed (kt)	QNH (hPa)
1932	0.0	30.5	005	5	6	1011.1
1933	0.0	30.5	352	7	8	1011.1
1934	0.0	30.5	356	6	7	1011.1
1935	0.0	30.5	356	7	8	1011.1
1936	0.0	30.5	360	9	10	1011.2
1937	0.0	30.3	354	10	13	1011.3
1938	0.0	30.2	352	12	16	1011.4
1939	0.0	28.7	349	18	25	1011.5
1940	0.0	27.3	001	20	25	1011.6
1941	0.0	26.4	357	22	28	1011.7
1942	0.0	25.8	004	21	26	1011.8
1943	0.0	25.6	011	20	26	1011.9
1944	0.0	25.5	016	15	21	1012.0
1945	0.0	25.3	014	17	22	1012.1
1946	0.0	25.2	006	14	18	1012.1
1947	0.0	25.2	021	17	21	1012.2
1948	0.0	25.0	020	15	21	1012.3
1949	0.0	24.9	024	16	24	1012.5
1950	0.0	24.7	027	18	23	1012.7
1951	0.2	24.6	028	15	21	1012.8
1952	0.2	24.6	034	15	19	1012.9
1953	0.0	24.6	036	13	18	1012.9
1954	0.0	24.6	032	17	25	1013.0
1955	0.0	24.6	029	15	20	1013.0
1956	0.0	24.7	027	10	14	1013.1
1957	0.2	24.7	038	15	19	1013.2
1958	0.6	24.6	031	18	27	1013.2
1959	0.2	24.5	042	15	19	1013.1
2000	0.0	24.3	044	17	19	1013.1
2001	0.2	24.2	048	15	19	1013.0
2002	0.0	24.1	053	11	16	1013.0
2003	0.2	24.1	048	10	14	1013.0
2004	0.0	24.0	058	10	13	1012.9
2005	0.2	23.9	053	9	13	1012.8
2006	0.2	23.8	055	10	14	1012.7
2007	0.0	23.7	054	8	10	1012.6
2008	0.2	23.7	071	9	11	1012.5
2009	0.0	23.6	061	6	8	1012.4
2010	0.2	23.6	046	7	8	1012.4

Briefing package

The pilot's briefing package included the forecast weather, aerodrome weather reports for Normanton and Cairns at 1730 local time and the relevant SIGMETs, consistent with that detailed above.

Sunset times

On 6 February 2026 at Normanton, daylight was from 0625–1913 and civil twilight[17] was 1913–1936. The moon rose at 2205.

Site and wreckage examination

The wreckage trail commenced at an impact mark at the top of a small tree to the left of an extended runway centreline, 360 m from the end of the runway (Figure 3). Propeller slash marks were evident on another tree approximately 20 m after the initial tree impact, followed by evidence of the aircraft fuselage's impact with the ground.

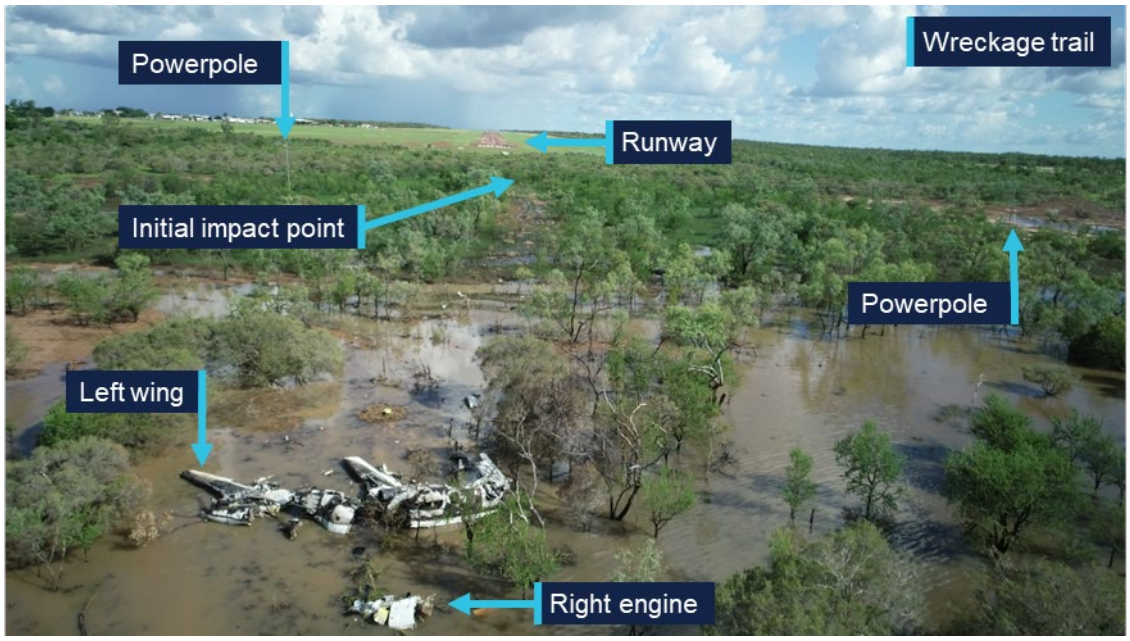
The left and right wing tips were located embedded in trees on either side of the wreckage trail, 60 m from the initial tree impact. Browning of vegetation commenced from this point onwards in the direction of travel, indicating rupturing of the wing fuel tanks. From there, the aircraft slid, underneath a set of powerlines, with a gradual right yaw that continued until its final resting place. There was no evidence of landing gear marks anywhere in the wreckage trail, indicating that all landing gear was in the 'up and locked' position.

The main fuselage was located in an upright position with the empennage fractured at the base of the vertical stabiliser (T-tail), which was lying on its right side. The cockpit had separated from the aircraft at the rear of the pilot's seat and was resting on its left side, partially submerged in water. The left wing and both engines had separated from the aircraft during the accident sequence. The fuselage, cockpit and right wing were heavily damaged from a post-impact fire.

Impact damage to the engine propellers indicated they were being driven by the engine during the impact sequence. All flight controls were located with the aircraft and measurements were taken of the flap, rudder trim and elevator trim actuators for further analysis.

[17] During civil twilight, the sun is between 0–6° below the horizon. There is enough natural sunlight during this period that artificial light may not be required to carry out outdoor activities. Only the brightest celestial objects can be observed by the naked eye during this time.

Figure 3: Wreckage trail of VH-PUY



Source: ATSB

Further investigation

To date, the ATSB has:

- inspected the wreckage
- recovered and retained equipment, including the cockpit voice recorder, for further examination
- collected operational and aircraft records from the aircraft operator and Civil Aviation Safety Authority
- collected air traffic control and airport data
- collected electronic flight bag data
- interviewed witnesses and company pilots
- collected weather data.

The investigation is continuing and will include:

- further interviews
- analysis of witness videos, photographs, airport data and interviews
- review of operational information
- analysis of data from air traffic control, the Bureau of Meteorology and equipment recovered from the aircraft.

A final report will be released at the conclusion of the investigation. Should a critical safety issue be identified during the course of the investigation, the ATSB will immediately notify relevant parties so appropriate and timely safety action can be taken.

Acknowledgements

The ATSB acknowledges the assistance provided by the Queensland Police Service and Carpentaria Shire Council.

General details

Occurrence details

Date and time:	6 February 2026 – 1951 Eastern Standard Time	
Occurrence class:	Accident	
Occurrence categories:	Collision with terrain	
Location:	Near Normanton Airport, Queensland	
	Latitude: 17.6765° S	Longitude: 141.0646° E

Aircraft details

Manufacturer and model:	Beech Aircraft Corp, B200C	
Registration:	VH-PUY	
Operator:	Machjet International Pty Ltd	
Serial number:	BL 41	
Type of operation:	Part 91 General operating and flight rules - Other	
Activity:	General aviation / Recreational-Other general aviation flying-Ferry flight	
Departure:	Normanton Airport, Queensland	
Destination:	Cairns Airport, Queensland	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – 0
Injuries:	Crew – 1 fatal	Passengers – none
Aircraft damage:	Destroyed	

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- influencing safety action.

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- identifying safety issues and facilitating safety action to address those issues
- providing information about occurrences and their associated safety factors to facilitate learning within the transport industry.

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