



## AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

SI/762/1014

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

## 1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

69 kilometres south-west of Grafton, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. 4000 feet	Date 21.3.76	Time (Local) 1655 hours	Zone EST
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## 2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA32/260	Registration VH-POR	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 24.6.75
Certificate of Registration issued to R. V. McHugh, 10 Hall Street, Tamworth, New South Wales.	Operator J. R. Rae, 179 Henry Street, Werris Creek, New South Wales.	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered  Nil		

## 3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Grafton	Time of departure 1625 hours	Next point of intended landing Tamworth	Purpose of flight Travel	Class of operation Private
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## 4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Jeffrey Robert RAE	Pilot	39	Private	46	177	Fatal

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Malcolm Stanley MITCHELL	Passenger	Fatal	Kathryn MITCHELL	Passenger	Fatal
Myrtle Mae MITCHELL	Passenger	Fatal			

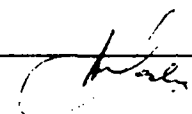
## 6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The aircraft was equipped with a radio compass and an automatic pilot which could be used to turn on to and hold any selected heading but the aircraft was authorised only for VFR operations. The pilot did not hold any class of instrument rating and was therefore restricted to flight in accordance with the Visual Flight Rules (VFR). Earlier in the day the pilot had flown the aircraft from Tamworth to Grafton, with four passengers, and for most of the flight the aircraft had been above cloud. Approaching Grafton, the aircraft had for a short time flown through cloud and some associated turbulence and it landed at Grafton at approximately 1030 hours.

The pilot subsequently telephoned Coffs Harbour Flight Service Unit (FSU) and advised details of his flight plan for a return VFR flight to Tamworth. The plan details indicated an estimated departure time from Grafton of 1600 hours, a cruising altitude of 6000 feet to Armidale and 4000 feet from Armidale to Tamworth, a flight time of 84 minutes and a fuel endurance of 220 minutes. After taking off, the pilot established radio communication with Coffs Harbour FSU and reported his departure time as 1625 hours. There were no further communications received from the aircraft and at 1815 hours, the time previously nominated by the pilot for the commencement of search and rescue action, the Uncertainty Phase was declared. When no information as to the whereabouts of the aircraft had been received by 1900 hours, the Distress Phase was declared and search action was commenced. At 0845 hours on the following day, the wreckage of the aircraft was located on the north-east slope of a ridge in a remote, densely timbered mountainous area. The accident site was virtually on the planned track of the aircraft and there is evidence to indicate that, at the time of initial impact with trees, the aircraft had been on a south-south-westerly heading in gently descending controlled flight with the wings level and at near normal cruising speed. A weak to moderately active low pressure trough passed over the north-eastern corner of New South Wales before the flight commenced and, although the weather conditions could not be positively determined, it is likely that cloud covered some of the high terrain in the area at the time of the accident.

## OPINION AS TO CAUSE

There is insufficient evidence available to determine the cause of this accident.

Approved for  
publication
  
(I. M. Leslie)  
Delegate of the Secretary

Date

26.1.1977