

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199501793**

**Bell Helicopter Co  
Jetranger**

**18 June 1995**

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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](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 199501793                      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** 41km NW Grafton (Township)  
**State:** NSW                                              **Inv Category:** 3  
**Date:** Sunday 18 June 1995  
**Time:** 1524 hours                                      **Time Zone:** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	Total
Crew	1	0	0	0	1
Ground	0	0	0	0	0
Passenger	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Bell Helicopter Co  
**Aircraft Model:** 206B  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-GEO                      **Serial Number:** 334  
**Type of Operation:** Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Destroyed  
**Departure Point:** Unknown  
**Departure Time:**  
**Destination:** Unknown

**Crew Details:**

<u>Role</u>	<u>Class of Licence</u>	<u>Hours on Type</u>	<u>Hours Total</u>
Pilot-In-Command	Private	670.0	2050

**Approved for Release:** Thursday, May 2, 1996

Sequence of Events.

At about 1000 EST, the pilot and passenger departed from the airstrip at Carrara where the helicopter is normally hangared. From information supplied by persons who knew the pilot, it appears likely that he flew to a remote section of the New England Ranges west of the Clarence river.

At about 1524 three people were mustering cattle just south of an 11,000-V powerline spanning the Clarence river. They saw a helicopter approach from the south and stopped to watch it fly out of sight to the north-west following the course of the river. Moments later, one of them heard the sound of a crash. Upon investigation they found the high-voltage powerline was down and saw parts of the helicopter in the river.

The investigation found that the helicopter had struck and severed the lowest of three high voltage wires spanning the river. The top surface of one main rotor blade had impacted the wire before the wire became entangled in the tail rotor. The evidence indicated that the helicopter started to break apart before impact with the water. The three-phase powerline had a span of 428 metres which drooped to 87 ft at its lowest point over the river. The powerline sloped from the western bank to a much lower bank east of the river. Both supports were obscured by trees when viewed from the south-east at low altitude. At the time of the accident the sun's azimuth was approximately 20 degrees west of the alignment of that particular reach of the river. The sun was elevated some 16-17 degrees above the horizon.

Evidence from persons in the aviation community who knew the pilot indicated that he had a love of low flying. The pilot was not approved by CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority) to conduct low flying operations.

The weather in the local area was fine with a clear sky and light winds.

Pathology tests revealed the pilot had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.098 g/100ml. Specialist medical opinion indicated that this concentration was most likely the result of alcohol consumption.

Significant factors.

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident:

1. The pilot was flying the helicopter at low altitude.
2. The pilot was probably affected by alcohol.
3. The pilot apparently did not see the powerline in time to take adequate avoiding action.