

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.
AS/702/1069

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

	Height a.m.s.l. (ft)	Date	Time (Local)	Zone
En route, Bankstown, N.S.W. - Coolangatta, Qld.	-	20.11.70	-	-

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model	Registration
Cessna 320D "Skyknight"	VH-CPP

3. CONCLUSIONS

On 20 November, 1970 a Cessna 320D "Skyknight" aircraft, registered VH-CPP, disappeared on a flight from Bankstown, New South Wales to Coolangatta, Queensland, and no trace has been found of the aircraft or its two occupants.

- (ii) The aircraft was owned by Claytell Pacific Pty. Ltd. of Nedlands, Western Australia and at the time of its disappearance it was engaged in a private flight.
- (iii) The pilot, James Edward Carter Clay, aged 42 years, held a Private Pilot Licence endorsed for the aircraft type. His total flying experience was approximately 107 hours of which some 20 hours had been gained on the Cessna 320 type of aircraft. He did not hold any class of Instrument Rating.
- (iv) In addition to the pilot the aircraft carried one passenger, Miss Helen Joyce Arvan.
- (v) There was a Certificate of Airworthiness for the aircraft and there is no evidence to indicate that the aircraft was in other than an airworthy condition.
- (vi) The radio navigation equipment fitted to the aircraft included two Very High Frequency Omni Range receivers, two Automatic Direction Finding receivers, Distance Measuring Equipment and Instrument Landing System equipment. There were no defects reported in any of this equipment but, in the course of a flight the previous day, the Distance Measuring Equipment had been observed temporarily to indicate a spurious distance but it then resumed normal operation. Communications made by the pilot during the flight and recorded at Coff's Harbour and Brisbane Flight Service Centres suggest that the Distance Measuring Equipment was in use during the flight.
- (vii) There is no evidence that the gross weight of the aircraft or the location of its centre of gravity were otherwise than within the limits specified in the approved flight manual for the aircraft.
- (viii) The pilot attended at the Bankstown Briefing Office before commencing the flight. After receiving appropriate weather and operational information he submitted a flight plan indicating that the flight was to be made under the Visual Flight Rules and was estimated to occupy a total time of 116 minutes. The aircraft was to proceed at altitudes below 5,000 feet above mean sea level and was to remain outside controlled airspace.
- (ix) The weather forecasts current for the period and covering the area through which the flight would take place, indicated that there should be 6/8 coverage of cumulus and strato cumulus cloud with a base of 2,500 feet. The visibility was expected to be 15 miles with some rain showers and drizzle present.
- (x) The Terminal Aerodrome Forecast for Coffs Harbour Airport, which was on the route to be followed by the aircraft, included south-south easterly winds with a visibility of 15 miles, rain showers and 3/8 of strato cumulus cloud at 2,500 feet. Additionally, for periods lasting less than 30 minutes each, the weather was expected to include 6/8 stratus cloud at 1,000 feet in showers with a visibility of 3 miles. At Coolangatta Airport the weather was forecast to be 6/8 of strato cumulus cloud at 2,500 feet with south easterly winds and a visibility of 10 miles. For periods of less than 30 minutes each, the visibility was expected to be 2 miles with 5/8 stratus cloud at 800 feet.

CONCLUSIONS (Cont'd)

(xi) The weather information available before the flight indicated that it should have been possible to complete the flight under Visual Flight Rules, but provision for 30 minutes additional fuel was required to provide for the possibility that visual meteorological conditions would temporarily not exist at the destination aerodrome at the time of arrival. The flight plan submitted by the pilot indicated that ample fuel was carried on the aircraft to meet such an exigency.

(xii) The aircraft departed Bankstown at 1634 hours EST and after clearing from the Bankstown Tower frequency, maintained contact with Sydney Flight Service Centre until, at 1740 hours, it called Coff's Harbour and advised that it was 60 miles south of Coff's Harbour. The pilot continued to report the progress of the flight and at 1745 hours advised that the aircraft was 40 miles south of Coff's Harbour at 3,000 feet. At 1754 hours the pilot requested that his SARTIME (time for the initiation of search and rescue procedures) should be amended to 1900 hours from the 1815 hours submitted for the flight plan at Bankstown. The aircraft reported passing Coff's Harbour at 1758 hours at two thousand feet above sea level.

(xiii) The weather at Coff's Harbour at 1800 hours, two minutes after the aircraft reported overhead at that station, was observed to include 5/8 of stratus cloud at 1,200 feet with a visibility of 2 miles in rain.

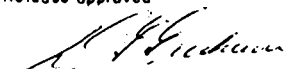
(xiv) At 1804 hours, in answer to a query from another aircraft, the pilot advised that he was tracking up the beach and that he was maintaining visual flight. At 1808 hours Coff's Harbour advised the pilot that the visibility at Coolangatta was down to two miles and the weather was very marginal for flights proceeding under Visual Flight Rules. The pilot acknowledged this transmission and at 1819 hours reported 30 miles south of Casino. The last communication with the aircraft was made at 1824 hours when the pilot reported that the position of the aircraft was 52 miles south of Coolangatta by the Distance Measuring Equipment. At 1831 hours the aircraft was requested by Brisbane Flight Service Centre to call Coolangatta Tower on 118.7 mcs. but this call was not acknowledged and the aircraft did not call Coolangatta Tower.

(xv) The aircraft did not arrive at Coolangatta and at 1930 hours the Uncertainty Phase of the search and rescue procedures was declared. Checks of nearby aerodromes failed to reveal the location of the aircraft and at 2015 hours the phase was upgraded to Alert Phase. The Distress Phase was declared at 2110 hours when the fuel on board the aircraft was considered to have been exhausted.

(xvi) Search operations commenced early on the morning of 21 November and continued for 6 days, during which helicopters and fixed wing aircraft flew a combined total of more than 203 hours. Numerous sighting and hearing reports were checked by aircraft and ground parties but no trace has been found of the aircraft or its occupants.

4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The reason for the failure of the aircraft to reach its destination has not been determined.

Release approved  (D.S. GRAHAM)	Designation Assistant Director-General (Air Safety Investigation)	Date 23.3.72
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