

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.
AS/713/1012

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Wurdee Boluc Reservoir, Victoria.	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 440 feet	Date 30.4.71	Time (Local) 0748 Approx.	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Piper PA24-260 "Comanche"	Registration VH-GWE	Certificate of Airworthiness	Valid from 3.3.66	Valid to 2.3.75
Registered Owner Canadian Australian Constructions Pty. Ltd., Brighton, Victoria.	Operator Campbell-Hicks Airways Pty. Ltd., Northern Road, Moorabbin Airport, Victoria.	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed		
Defects discovered		Other property damaged Nil.		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Moorabbin	Time of departure 0703	Next point of intended landing Warrnambool	Purpose of flight Travel	Class of operation Private
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THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Otto Johannes STAPELFELDT	Pilot	38	Private	25 Approx.	225 Approx.	Serious

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
John Charles FRANK	Passenger	Serious	David Stewart RODGERS	Passenger	Serious
Heather May FRANK	Passenger	Serious	Vernon BLACKMAN	Passenger	Fatal

6. CONTRAVENTIONS OF REGULATIONS AND ORDERS

Regulation or Order No.	Nature of contravention
A.N.R. 149(2)	The pilot conducted a VFR flight in meteorological conditions which were less than the minimum prescribed for such flights. The aircraft was flown at a lower height than 500 feet. A safety belt was not worn by a passenger when the aircraft was flying at a height less than 1,000 feet.
A.N.R. 133(2)(b)	
A.N.R. 244(1)(c)	

RELEVANT EVENTS

The occupants of the aircraft had business commitments at Warrnambool and also at Shepparton later in the day. The pilot obtained a meteorological forecast which indicated that conditions generally would be suitable for visual flight, but that until 0900 hours there would be areas of drizzle and reduced visibility. He submitted a flight plan which indicated that his route to Warrnambool would be via Sorrento and Colac. The flight proceeded normally at 1,500 feet to about 10 miles west of Torquay, where the aircraft encountered an area of low cloud and drizzle. The pilot descended to remain clear of cloud and when the aircraft had reached the vicinity of the Wurdee Boluc Reservoir he was compelled to fly at an extremely low level to maintain visual contact with the ground. He circled in this area, unable to proceed or to turn back because of the low cloud and reduced visibility in all directions. While flying along the southern edge of the reservoir he observed a line of tall pine trees looming ahead and to avoid them he made a left hand turn over the reservoir. During the turn the port wing tip contacted the surface and the aircraft cartwheeled into the water. There were no witnesses to the accident and one of the four surviving occupants swam a considerable distance to the shore for assistance whilst the other three surviving persons remained standing on the aircraft wreckage which had settled in some 10 feet of water. The fourth passenger had released his seat belt during the flight and was apparently thrown from the aircraft on impact with the water.

8. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the pilot proceeded into weather conditions in which visual flight with adequate terrain clearance could not be maintained.

Report approved <i>D.S. Graham</i> (D.S. GRAHAM)	Designation Assistant Director-General (Air Safety Investigation)	Date 5.11.71
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DEFINITIONS

ACCIDENT - An occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight until such time as all those persons have disembarked and in which

- (a) any person suffers death or serious injury as a result of being in or upon the aircraft or by direct contact with the aircraft or anything attached to the aircraft; or
- (b) the aircraft suffers substantial damage.

FATAL INJURY - Any injury which results in death within 30 days.

SERIOUS INJURY - Any injury other than a fatal injury which

- (a) requires hospitalisation for more than 48 hours, commencing within seven days from the date the injury was received; or
- (b) results in a fracture of any bone (except simple fractures of fingers, toes or nose); or
- (c) involves lacerations which cause severe haemorrhages, nerve, muscle or tendon damage; or
- (d) involves injury to any internal organ; or
- (e) involves second or third degree burns, or any burns affecting more than five percent of the body surface.

MINOR INJURY - Any injury other than as defined under "Fatal Injury" or "Serious Injury".

DESTROYED - Consumed by fire, demolished or damaged beyond repair.

SUBSTANTIAL DAMAGE - Damage or structural failure which adversely affects the structural strength, performance or flight characteristics of the aircraft and which would normally require major repair or replacement of the affected component. The following types of damage are specifically excluded: engine failure, damage limited to an engine, bent fairings or cowlings, dented skin, small punctured holes in the skin or fabric, taxi-ing damage to propeller blades, damage to tyres, engine accessories, brakes, or wingtips.

MINOR DAMAGE - Damage other than as defined under "Destroyed" or "Substantial Damage".