GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Publication of this report is authorised by the Director-General of Civil Aviation under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulation 283(1)

Reference No. AS/744/1009

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

	Height a.m.s.l.	Date	Time (Local)	Zone
Batchelor, Northern Territory	101 metres	17.3.74	1430 (Approx)	CST

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model	Registration	Certificate of Airworthiness
Cessna 182L	VH-EQU	Valid from 16.3.72 to 15.3.81

Certificate of Registration issued to	Operator	Degree of damage to aircraft
George Papa, P.O. Box 1325, Darwin, Northern Territory.	Ace Parachute Centre, P.O. Box 1325, Darwin, Northern Territory.	Destroyed Other property damaged Nil

Defects discovered

Nil

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point	Time of departure	Next point of intended landing	Purpose of flight	Class of operation
Batchelor	1430 hours Approximately	Darwin	Travel	Private

4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
Frederick John LUCKIE	Pilot	32	Commercial	89	438	Fatal

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Trevor John LAMONT	Passenger	Fatal	Wendy DURRANT Ross MILLARD	Passenger Passenger	Serious Serious

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The starboard door and all seats except that for the pilot had been removed from the aircraft for parachuting operations to be undertaken at Batchelor. Safety belts were provided on the floor adjacent to the pilot's seat and at two other positions in the cabin. During the morning the pilot flew the aircraft from Darwin to Batchelor and he experienced some difficulty in maintaining radio communications. Throughout the day the aircraft made a number of parachute dropping flights over Batchelor aerodrome and it was flown by Mr. Luckie on six of those occasions. After the parachuting was completed the aircraft was refuelled and the pilot, in view of his earlier communication difficulties, arranged to follow Cessna aircraft VH-BWM on the return flight to Darwin. At approximately 1425 hours whilst VH-BWM was preparing for take-off, the pilot of that aircraft saw VH-EQU standing with the engine running, facing his own aircraft from a position across the runway. VH-BWM then took off to the south-east and shortly afterwards, the pilot visually checked the runway but could not see VH-EQU. He assumed that the aircraft had taken off and was behind him but, some 12 minutes later, having neither seen nor heard VH-EQU he queried Darwin as to its whereabouts. Attempts to contact VH-EQU by radio and Batchelor by telephone were equally unsuccessful and an aircraft was diverted to Batchelor to search. At 1627 hours the wreckage of VH-EQU was located in an area of relatively dense timber 137 metres beyond and 91 metres to the left of the end of Runway 14 at Batchelor. The aircraft had struck the ground at a relatively low speed whilst in a steep nose down, left wing down attitude. The evidence indicates that the aircraft sustained a substantial, but unexplained, loss of power at a low height after take off. The pilot commenced a steep turn to the left, apparently choosing to attempt to regain the aerodrome rather than commit the aircraft to a hazardous landing in the timbered area ahead. The aircraft, however, lost height rapidly and crashed amongst the trees. The passengers seated on the floor in the rear section of the cabin and wearing safety belts, survived the accident. The pilot had fastened only the lap strap of his lap/sash harness and the passenger to his right was not wearing the safety belt provided.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of this accident was the occurrence of a major engine power loss when the aircraft was at a low height after take off and over timbered terrain. The reason for the loss of engine power could not be determined.

Approved for publication

Frank E. Yeend

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Delegate of the Director-General of Civil Aviation

Date 23.10.74

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 cowling, 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".