

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.
AS/721/1018

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

3/4 mile south of Dajarra Aerodrome, Queensland	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 1010 feet	Date 28.5.72	Time (Local) 1445	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 172G	Registration VH-PLX
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3. CONCLUSIONS

(i) At approximately 1445 hours EST on 28 May, 1972, a parachutist was fatally injured by impact with the ground following a free-fall descent at Dajarra Aerodrome, Queensland.

(ii) The parachutist was Frank John GAGAN aged 24 years, a member of the Mt. Isa Skydivers Club. His parachute log book indicated that he had completed 22 jumps prior to the descent on which the accident occurred. Ten of the jumps recorded were made using a static line exit and the remaining twelve were made in free-fall. He was currently receiving instruction in 10 second delayed descents and had completed one jump involving a 10 second delay on the previous day and one other such descent on the morning of 28 May, 1972.

(iii) The parachutist was equipped with a back-mounted pack, type A9 main parachute, manufactured by the Parachute Company Ltd., U.S.A., attached to a B4 harness. The ripcord handle for the main parachute was attached to the right hand side of the harness on a level with the wearer's breast pocket. A chest-mounted pack, type AAF 441-1 manufactured by the Hayes Manufacturing Company, U.S.A., was worn as a reserve parachute.

(iv) The main parachute had been re-packed for this descent by the parachutist under the supervision of his instructor. There was no evidence of any defect in either parachute or in the ancillary equipment which could have led, or have been contributory, to the accident.

(v) At the time of the accident the weather was fine and cloudless with a visibility of approximately 35 miles. The wind was assessed as a south-easterly at 10 to 12 knots.

(vi) The descent on which the accident occurred was made from a Cessna 172G aircraft, registered VH-PLX. The holder of the Certificate of Registration for this aircraft was T.A. Eakin and the aircraft was flown by Marcia June Smith, who was the holder of a valid commercial pilot licence. Also in the aircraft were the jumpmaster, Hermanus Theodorus Anthonisse and a second parachutist, Anthony Barry Faulks.

(vii) The descent was planned to include a 10 second delay from 3,500 feet with a canopy deployment height of approximately 2,500 feet. The parachutist made a normal exit from the aircraft and the free-fall segment of the descent was seen to be stable. After a delay consistent with the exercise on which he was engaged, the parachutist was observed to bend his arms inward in a manner which suggested that he was about to operate the main parachute ripcord, but his hands were not then re-extended as would have been expected had the ripcord been operated normally. The main parachute did not deploy and the parachutist continued to fall in a stable manner until at about 100 feet above the ground, when deployment of the reserve parachute commenced. There was insufficient height remaining to permit full deployment of the reserve parachute and the rate of descent of the parachutist did not significantly decrease before he struck the ground.

(viii) The main parachute pack burst open on impact and the canopy was found still encased in its sleeve. The main parachute ripcord handle was clear of the retaining pocket and the ripcord cable was extracted from its housing to the "pulled" position. A sharp bend in the ripcord cable suggested that prior to impact the cable may have been partially extracted from the housing but to an extent which would have been insufficient for the release pins to have cleared the retaining cones on the parachute pack.

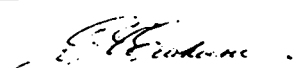
CONCLUSIONS (Cont'd)

(lx) The reserve parachute operated normally but the time available for its deployment after actuation of the ripcord was such that the shroud lines had not been fully extracted from the retaining bands in the parachute pack.

(x) The reason for the failure of the parachutist to successfully deploy the main parachute could not be determined.

4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the parachutist, having failed for an undetermined reason to activate the main parachute, did not take timely action to deploy his reserve parachute.

Release approved  (D.S. GRAHAM)	Designation Assistant Director-General (Air Safety Investigation)	Date 11.5.1973
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