

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199300131**

**Cessna Aircraft Company
172C**

18 February 1993

Readers are advised that the Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigates for the sole purpose of enhancing transport safety. Consequently, Bureau reports are confined to matters of safety significance and may be misleading if used for any other purposes.

Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

Investigations commenced after 1 July 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the Executive Director of the Bureau in accordance with the Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 (TSI Act). Reports released under the TSI Act are not admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings.

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.

Occurrence Number: 199300131 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 7km S Coffs Harbour
State: NSW **Inv Category:** 3
Date: Thursday 18 February 1993
Time: 1335 hours **Time Zone** ESuT
Highest Injury Level: Fatal
Injuries:

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None	Total
Crew	1	0	0	0	1
Ground	0	0	0	0	0
Passenger	0	0	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0	1

Aircraft Manufacturer: Cessna Aircraft Company
Aircraft Model: 172C
Aircraft Registration: VH-JLG **Serial Number:** 17248836
Type of Operation: Non-commercial Pleasure/Travel
Damage to Aircraft: Destroyed
Departure Point: Kooralbyn QLD
Departure Time:
Destination: Taree NSW

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	Private	400.0	400

Approved for Release: Tuesday, July 27, 1993

The aircraft had been cleared to track south over water at 1,000 feet through the Coffs Harbour zone. At 1324 hours the pilot reported passing Woolgoolga and subsequently reported abeam the control tower. At this time he requested clearance to descend to 500 feet. He was cleared to descend, but two minutes later, at 1334 hours the pilot reported that he was returning to Coffs Harbour for a landing and that he had lost visual contact with the water. He was cleared to join the circuit on downwind for runway 21 on a visual approach and was asked to report abeam the control tower. This was acknowledged by the pilot at 1334:51, but there was no further communication from the aircraft. An overflying jet aircraft reported receiving a transmission from a VHF Survival Beacon for a period of about 10 seconds shortly after the time of the pilot's last transmission.

The Automatic Terminal Information Service (ATIS) was reporting 3 octa of cloud at 1,000 feet, with lower patches, and 4 octa of cloud at 2,000 feet. Showers were reported in the area.

The aircraft wreckage was located in the sea near Sawtell. Wreckage examination suggests the aircraft struck the water in a descending right turn. There was no indication that the aircraft was not capable of normal flight immediately prior to the accident. A heavy rainstorm was reported near Sawtell at the time of the accident. The pilot was not qualified for flight in other than visual conditions. It is most probable that the aircraft inadvertently entered a heavy rain shower which deprived the pilot of visual contact with the land and water. The pilot attempted a turn to head back to Coffs Harbour aerodrome but as he was not qualified for flight by sole reference to the aircraft's flight instruments, it is probable the aircraft entered a steep descent from which the pilot was unable to effect a recovery prior to collision with the sea.

Significant Factors

1. The pilot inadvertently flew into conditions of limited visibility associated with a heavy rain shower.
2. The pilot was not qualified for flight by sole reference to the aircraft's flight instruments.
3. The conditions of visibility reduced such that the pilot was unable to continue the flight by visual reference to the land and water.
4. The pilot attempted to turn to regain visual contact and during the turn entered a descent from which he was unable to effect recovery prior to collision with the sea.