

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

AS/735/1011

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

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

West Wallabi Island, Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia

Height a.m.s.l.
Sea LevelDate
14.5.73Time (Local)
1152 hoursZone
WST

2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna A185E	Registration VH-ELQ	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 6.2.73 to 5.2.82
Certificate of Registration issued to Nationwide Air Services Pty. Ltd., c/- News Ltd., Kippax and Holt Streets, Sydney, New South Wales,	Operator Geraldton Fisherman's Co-op Ltd., Ocean Street, Geraldton, Western Australia,	Degree of damage to aircraft Substantial Other property damaged Nil
Defects discovered Micro-switch controlling port blue light for wheels up indication corroded and inoperative.		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point Geraldton	Time of departure 1123 hours	Next point of intended landing Accident Site	Purpose of flight Carriage of Passengers	Class of operation Charter
---	---------------------------------	---	--	-------------------------------

4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
John BELL	Pilot	37	Commercial	500	8277	Nil

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

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
Joyce Shirley MURRAY	Passenger	Minor	Sonja GOODLICH	Passenger	Nil
Jennifer Anne MURRAY	Passenger	Nil			

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

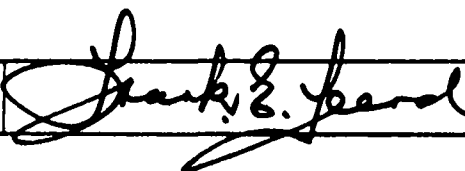
The aircraft was engaged in amphibious operations and was equipped with two landing floats, each fitted with a nose wheel and a main landing wheel. The wheel units, normally extended for surface operations on land, are designed to retract into recesses in the floats and it is essential that they be in the retracted position whenever the aircraft alights on water. The position of the wheel units at any particular time is indicated to the pilot by lights in the cockpit. Additionally, the position of portions of the mechanism for retracting and extending the wheel units can be viewed from the cockpit through a small clear panel on the top of each float.

After taking off from Geraldton Airport, the aircraft proceeded direct to West Wallabi Island, a flight of some 57 miles. Before landing the pilot circled the area of calm water on which he proposed to alight, adjacent to the small settlement of West Wallabi. It was his normal practice to check the position of the wheel units whilst the aircraft was on the downwind leg of the circuit before landing, but he cannot recall having done so on this occasion. The approach was made with the flaps set to 30 degrees and, before touchdown, the aircraft was held off at a low height with the throttle closed. The aircraft contacted the water at a speed of about 45 knots and immediately pitched forward violently, decelerating rapidly. The nose down change of attitude continued and the aircraft came to rest partly inverted in water some three feet deep. The cabin area was intact and was not immersed. A boat was quickly on the scene and after some minor difficulty in releasing the passengers, who were suspended strapped in their seats, the aircraft was evacuated.

When the aircraft was subsequently examined, the wheel units were found to be in the down position. It has not been possible to determine at what point during the flight this undercarriage configuration was selected. The indicating light for the up position of the port wheel was not operative, but this would not prevent the pilot from ascertaining the position of that wheel. There was no other malfunction of the aircraft or its systems which could have contributed to the occurrence.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that the pre-landing cockpit checking procedures adopted by the pilot were not sufficiently positive to prevent the aircraft from being landed on the water with the wheels extended.

Approved for
publication

(FRANK E. YEEND)

Delegate of the Director-General of Civil Aviation

Date
6.6.1974

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".