

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
198201430**

**Piper PA28-161 Warrior**

**11 November 1982**

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 CEO 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 CEO 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](http://www.atsb.gov.au).**

**Occurrence Number:** 198201430  
**Location:** Gloucester NSW  
**Date:** 11 November 1982  
**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal  
**Injuries:**

**Occurrence Type:** Accident

**Time:** 0842

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	1	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	3	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Aircraft Details:** Piper PA28-161 Warrior  
**Registration:** VH-UDX  
**Serial Number:**  
**Operation Type:** Travel  
**Damage Level:** Destroyed  
**Departure Point:** Scone NSW  
**Departure Time:** 733  
**Destination:** Casino NSW

**Approved for Release:** 21st March 1984

#### **Circumstances:**

The purpose of the flight was to convey the three passengers to Casino for business. Messrs Parkinson and Curran travelled on the aircraft from Cessnock to Scone earlier in the morning, where Mr Turnbull joined the flight to Casino. Prior to departing Scone the pilot telephoned Sydney Operational Control Centre Briefing Office and submitted a flight plan which indicated that the flight would be conducted in accordance with Visual Flight Rules (VFR) and proceed via Upper Bowman and Taree at 7000 feet above mean sea level (amsl) to Port Macquarie and then Casino. The pilot also indicated when submitting the flight plan that no radio navigation aids were fitted to the aircraft. The pilot then received a briefing on the weather conditions that could be expected along the route to be flown. The winds were given as generally southerly at about twenty knots with the cloud as scattered stratus between 1000 and 2500 feet and areas of broken strato-cumulus between 2000 and 6000 feet amsl. At 0740 hours the pilot advised Sydney Flight Service (FS), by radio, that the aircraft had departed Scone at 0733 and was climbing to 7000 feet. At 0809 the pilot reported the aircraft's position at Upper Bowman, cruising at 7000 feet and estimating Taree at 0829. Twelve minutes later the pilot of another aircraft also bound for Taree contacted VH-UDX and asked the pilot to confirm the aircraft altitude as 7000 feet. The pilot of VH-UDX replied that his aircraft was at 6500 feet on descent to 5000 feet and that he had run into a bit of "murk". When questioned further by the other pilot and Sydney FS the pilot reported VH-UDX was at 6000 feet in cloud and requested the visibility at lower altitudes. The pilot was advised that the cloud base at Williamtown was 3000 feet and he then reported that he intended to back track to Scone. The pilot was then requested to activate the transponder fitted to the aircraft and VH-UDX was subsequently identified by radar 18 nautical miles south-west of Taree at 0828 hours. The pilot was advised of this position and reported his heading, which indicated the aircraft was tracking towards Scone. During the next few minutes Sydney FS obtained information from the pilot relating to fuel endurance; estimate for Scone; altitude and cloud conditions. The last communication received from the aircraft was at 0838 when the pilot

acknowledged an instruction to call Williamtown Approach (for radar assistance). Further communication attempts were unsuccessful. At about 0840, residents of Gloucester heard the sound of an aircraft engine, apparently at high power, moving from the west to the north of the town. They could not see the aircraft. At the time there was dense cloud overhead, base about 800 feet above ground level (elevation 350 feet amsl), with drizzle. The aircraft appeared suddenly, descending steeply from the base of the cloud. The nose rose momentarily then the left mainplane folded back against the fuselage, separated and dropped away. The empennage separated from the fuselage. The fuselage with the right wing attached struck the ground in a park on the western edge of the town. The left wing, empennage and some other debris landed several hundred metres to the north east of the main wreckage. Subsequent investigation did not reveal any pre-existing fault with the aircraft that could have contributed to the accident. The weather conditions that were encountered by the pilot were substantially as forecast and relayed to the pilot during the pre-flight briefing.

**Significant Factors:**

1. The pilot did not hold an instrument rating.
2. The pilot continued VFR flight into adverse weather conditions.
3. The pilot probably experienced spatial disorientation while flying in cloud, resulting in loss of control of the aircraft.
4. The design strength limit of the aircraft was exceeded, probably after the pilot saw the ground and attempted to take corrective action to avoid impact.