

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198900260**

Modified Benson-style Rotorcraft

2nd March 1989

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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: 198900260

Occurrence Type: Accident

Location: Lake Walyungup WA

Date: 2nd March 1989

Time: 1900

Highest Injury Level: Fatal

Injuries:

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

Aircraft Details: Modified Benson-style
Rotorcraft

Registration: WG 371 (ASRA)

Serial Number: Nil

Operation Type: Air Navigation Order 95.12

Damage Level: Substantial

Departure Point: Lake Walyungup WA

Departure Time: 1853

Destination: Lake Walyungup WA

Approved for Release: 5th July 1989

Circumstances:

The pilot had recently finished modifying his Benson style Rotorcraft and he was attempting to have it ready to participate in the annual Sports Aircraft Association of Australia fly-in at Serpentine which was planned for the weekend following the accident. The pilot had not flown since he commenced work on the modifications over twelve months prior to the accident. The Technical Committee from the Rotorcraft Club of WA Inc. inspected the aircraft and its modifications on the day before the accident and they required some changes to be made before the aircraft was flown. Some of the committee members also advised the pilot that he should have an experienced, current pilot with him when he test flew the aircraft. A friend, who was not a Rotorcraft pilot, accompanied the pilot to the Club's flying area on the afternoon of the accident and helped prepare the aircraft for flight. The aircraft became airborne after spending some time taxiing around on the ground. The pilot carried out a number of turns. In one turn, the aircraft was also seen to climb and descend, before entering what appeared to be a controlled, steep descent. The aircraft did not completely recover from the descent before it collided with the ground and the pilot was killed. The accident occurred after sunset and just prior to official last light on the dry bed of a salt lake. An inspection of the wreckage did not disclose any faults with the aircraft that may have contributed to the accident. The engine was delivering power at the time of impact.

Significant Factors:

The following factors were considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. The pilot was under self-imposed pressure to complete the modifications to his aircraft.

2. The pilot ignored the advice given to him by the Rotorcraft Association technical committee and flew the aircraft without the supervision of an experienced pilot.
3. The pilot was inexperienced and he was not current in flying practices.
4. The pilot attempted a manoeuvre that was beyond his current level of skill and he apparently misjudged the recovery height required to complete the manoeuvre successfully.
5. It is possible that the fading light and the lack of definition provided by the salt lake bed affected the pilot's height judgement during the recovery from the manoeuvre.