## **Aviation Safety Investigation Report 198802398**

Cessna C185-A

18 October 1988

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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: 198802398 Occurrence Type: Accident

**Location:** 2.5km south of Lake Liddell NSW

**Date:** 18 October 1988 **Time:** 710

**Highest Injury Level:** Fatal

**Injuries:** 

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	1	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	2	1	0	0
Total	3	1	0	0

Aircraft Details: Cessna C185-A

Registration: VH-CME
Serial Number: 1850273
Operation Type: Private
Damage Level: Destroyed

Howick Open Cut Coal

**Departure Point:** Howick Open Mine NSW

**Departure Time:** 0710

**Destination:** Scone NSW

**Approved for Release:** 14th March 1990

## **Circumstances:**

The aircraft was being flown by the owner/pilot, who was on a flying holiday with three friends. The pilot had experienced navigation difficulties on two occasions while endeavouring to proceed to Schofields. As a result of those occurrences, the Civil Aviation Authority required the pilot to undertake local navigation training before continuing the next stage of the flight. Following the training the pilot departed Schofields at 1724 hours for Scone with a planned time interval of 55 minutes. Calculated end of daylight was 1834 hours. The flight planned track passed over aerodromes at Cessnock and Singleton. From details provided by the survivor, it would appear that the pilot thought he had reached Scone but was unable to locate the aerodrome. It is considered that the pilot probably reached Muswellbrook, a similar sized town near Scone but without an aerodrome. At 1830 50 EST the pilot reported to Sydney Flight Service "Sydney, Charlie Mike Echo, Scone circuit area, cancel SAR please". At about that time the aircraft landed on a curved gravel road at an open-cut mine, located about 40 km from Scone. A witness said that he had spoken to the occupants after the aircraft had landed. They said they had intended to land at Scone but had run out of daylight before they could find the aerodrome. They had decided to return and land on a strip they had seen earlier but were unable to find it and so decided to land on the road. The pilot said they would camp the night and leave early the next morning. He also asked that the witness "keep things as quiet as possible because there could be trouble if the right people were to hear about it". The next morning the aircraft was observed by a number of witnesses to attempt to take-off from the gravel road in the opposite direction to that used for landing. This had involved passing through a steel frame, some 18 metres wide, spanning the roadway and then negotiating a curve of about 50 degrees. After a take-off roll of about 500 metres, in an easterly direction, the aircraft had become airborne for a brief distance before the landing gear struck a low mound of rocks bordering the edge of part of the open-cut mine. The aircraft had then descended steeply, at a relatively low forward speed, before

impacting heavily on a wide "step" within the open-cut, about 200 feet below the level of the roadway. The weather at the time of the accident was reported to have been fine and cool with a light breeze from the west.

## **Significant Factors:**

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

- 1. Pilot became lost/unsure of position.
- 2. Pilot unwilling to seek assistance due to perceived possible repercussions.
- 3. Pilot exercised poor judgement.
- 4. Pilot elected to use unsuitable area for take-off.

## **Reccomendations:**

It is recommended that the circumstances of this accident, and the relevant events leading to it, form the basis of an article on operational decision making and the responsibilities of command. It is suggested that the article be published in the Aviation Safety Digest.