

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
198800731**

**Bell 206 B**

**13 September 1988**

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).**

This accident was not subject to an on site investigation. Relevant details were provided by the pilot.

**Occurrence Number:** 198800731      **Occurrence Type:** Accident  
**Location:** 170 km SE of Tindal NT  
**Date:** 13 September 1988      **Time:** 1015  
**Highest Injury Level:** Nil  
**Injuries:**

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	0	0	1	1
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

**Aircraft Details:** Bell 206 B  
**Registration:** VH-TFH  
**Serial Number:** 1746  
**Operation Type:** Aerial Work  
**Damage Level:** Substantial  
**Departure Point:** Hodgson River Station NT  
**Departure Time:** N/K  
**Destination:** Hodgson River Station NT

**Approved for Release:** 6 May 1989

#### **Circumstances:**

The pilot was engaged in a stream sampling operation. He reported that he was flying at an airspeed of about 20 knots at about 100 feet above the ground when sudden sink was encountered. Power was increased and the descent was arrested, but the main rotor blades struck a dead branch protruding from a tree. The low rotor rpm warning sounded, and the pilot reduced the power and autorotated to a clear area for a safe touchdown. The sink had been experienced in gusty crosswind conditions, while the pilot had been operating at a relatively low power setting. Post flight inspection revealed that the tail rotor had also received damage, probably caused by debris from the branch struck by the main rotor blades.

#### **Significant Factors:**

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

1. The pilot probably operated with the airspeed and power below the optimum values for the existing weather conditions.
2. There was probably a loss of translational lift, resulting in an unexpected descent.