

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198702404**

Cessna 172

23 April 1987

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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: 198702404 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 64km North West of Port Macquarie NSW
Date: 23 April 1987 **Time:** 1221
Highest Injury Level: Fatal
Injuries:

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	1	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	3	0	0	0
Total	4	0	0	0

Aircraft Details: Cessna 172
Registration: VH-MWS
Serial Number:
Operation Type: Private (Pleasure)
Damage Level: Destroyed
Departure Point: Tamworth NSW
Departure Time: 1221
Destination: Port Macquarie NSW

Approved for Release: 21 September 1987

Circumstances:

Prior to commencing the flight the pilot received a briefing on the meteorological situation. This briefing indicated that the flight under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) would not be possible over the route and that the conditions were unlikely to improve during the day. The pilot apparently decided to check the weather situation for himself and submitted a flight plan for a flight to Port Macquarie. The plan indicated that the flight would comply with VFR procedures. The aircraft departed Tamworth but failed to arrive at the destination before the expiry of the nominated Search and Rescue time (SARTIME). A land and air search was commenced, although the latter was initially hampered by poor weather conditions. No trace of the aircraft was found and the search was suspended after five days. Two days later the wreckage was located by an aircraft conducting a private search. The aircraft had flown into tall trees on the top of a 3500 feet high ridge line. It had been torn apart by the impact forces and the wreckage was spread over a distance of some 90 metres beyond the initial impact point. The investigation did not reveal any pre-impact defect with the aircraft or its systems which might have contributed to the accident. An analysis of the weather conditions in the vicinity indicated that the accident site was most likely covered with cloud. The pilot was probably flying in conditions of reduced forward visibility when the aircraft collided with the trees.