



**Australian Government**

**Australian Transport Safety Bureau**

# Controlled flight into terrain involving a Robinson R22, VH-LZR

100 km E Mataranka Township (ALA), Northern Territory, 10 February 2014

**ATSB Transport Safety Report**  
Aviation Occurrence Investigation  
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#### **Addendum**

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# Controlled flight into terrain involving a Robinson R22, VH-LZR

## What happened

On 10 February 2014, at about 1500 Central Standard Time, the pilot of a Robinson R22 helicopter, registered VH-LZR, commenced take-off for a private local flight from a property about 100 km east of Mataranka, Northern Territory.

As the helicopter became airborne heading to the south-east, the pilot sighted an object moving to his right. At about 10 ft above ground level, the pilot was distracted looking outside the door at the object and the helicopter collided with a tree. The object was not identified. The helicopter sustained substantial damage and the pilot was uninjured (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Damage to VH-LZR**



Source: Owner

## Safety message

This incident shows that distractions can have a significant impact on flight safety.

Distraction is defined as a process, condition or activity that takes a pilot's attention away from the task of flying. Even a momentary deflection of attention away from the primary task can have adverse consequences. Studies found that all pilots are vulnerable to distraction, the sources of distraction are diverse and distractions can occur during all stages of flight.

Research conducted by the ATSB identified 325 occurrences between 1997 and 2004 which involved distractions. In 35 of the incidents the distraction occurred during take-off. A total of 11 distractions were attributed to an object or person on the ground, two of which resulted in a collision with foliage or a tree.

The report *Dangerous Distraction* is available at [www.astb.gov.au/publications/2005/distraction\\_report.aspx](http://www.astb.gov.au/publications/2005/distraction_report.aspx)

## General details

### Occurrence details

Date and time:	10 February 2014 – 1500 CST	
Occurrence category:	Accident	
Primary occurrence type:	Controlled flight into terrain	
Location:	100 km E Mataranka (ALA), Northern Territory	
	Latitude: 14° 59.05' S	Longitude: 133° 59.53' E

### Helicopter details

Manufacturer and model:	Robinson R22 BETA	
Registration:	VH-LZR	
Serial number:	2629	
Type of operation:	Private	
Persons on board:	Crew – 1	Passengers – Nil
Injuries:	Crew – Nil	Passengers – Nil
Damage:	Substantial	

## About the ATSB

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) is an independent Commonwealth Government statutory agency. The ATSB is governed by a Commission and is entirely separate from transport regulators, policy makers and service providers. The ATSB's function is to improve safety and public confidence in the aviation, marine and rail modes of transport through excellence in: independent investigation of transport accidents and other safety occurrences; safety data recording, analysis and research; and fostering safety awareness, knowledge and action.

The ATSB is responsible for investigating accidents and other transport safety matters involving civil aviation, marine and rail operations in Australia that fall within Commonwealth jurisdiction, as well as participating in overseas investigations involving Australian registered aircraft and ships. A primary concern is the safety of commercial transport, with particular regard to fare-paying passenger operations.

The ATSB performs its functions in accordance with the provisions of the *Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003* and Regulations and, where applicable, relevant international agreements.

The object of a safety investigation is to identify and reduce safety-related risk. ATSB investigations determine and communicate the safety factors related to the transport safety matter being investigated.

It is not a function of the ATSB to apportion blame or determine liability. At the same time, an investigation report must include factual material of sufficient weight to support the analysis and findings. At all times the ATSB endeavours to balance the use of material that could imply adverse comment with the need to properly explain what happened, and why, in a fair and unbiased manner.

## About this report

Decisions regarding whether to conduct an investigation, and the scope of an investigation, are based on many factors, including the level of safety benefit likely to be obtained from an investigation. For this occurrence, a limited-scope, fact-gathering investigation was conducted in order to produce a short summary report, and allow for greater industry awareness of potential safety issues and possible safety actions.