

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199901176**

**Cessna Aircraft Company
402C**

26 February 1999

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 Executive Director 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 Executive Director 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.

Occurrence Number: 199901176 **Occurrence Type:** Incident
Location: 9km SE Palm Island, (ALA)
State: QLD **Inv Category:** 4
Date: Friday 26 February 1999
Time: 1636 hours **Time Zone** EST
Highest Injury Level: None

Aircraft Manufacturer: Cessna Aircraft Company
Aircraft Model: 402C
Aircraft Registration: VH-UCD **Serial Number:** 402C0049
Type of Operation: Air Transport Domestic Low Capacity Passenger Scheduled
Damage to Aircraft: Nil
Departure Point: Townsville Qld
Departure Time: 1624 EST
Destination: Palm Island Qld

Approved for Release: Tuesday, July 20, 1999

During the pre-flight inspection, the pilot of the Cessna 402 noticed an unusual amount of free play in the elevator trim tab system. A maintenance inspection did not detect any abnormality.

During the subsequent flight, while in the cruise, the aircraft suddenly pitched nose down without any input from the pilot. He disconnected the autopilot but this did not remedy the pitch problem. Re-trimming the aircraft also made no difference to the pitch down tendency.

After an uneventful landing at the destination, an inspection by a licenced aircraft maintenance engineer revealed that the bolt attaching the trim tab actuator rod to the trim jack could not be located.

