

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199703704**

**Piper Aircraft Corp
Navajo**

12 November 1997

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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: 199703704 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: 6km NNE Maitland, (ALA)
State: NSW **Inv Category:** 4
Date: Wednesday 12 November 1997
Time: 1730 hours **Time Zone** ESuT
Highest Injury Level: None

Aircraft Manufacturer: Piper Aircraft Corp
Aircraft Model: PA-31
Aircraft Registration: VH-WAL **Serial Number:** 31-7300943
Type of Operation: Charter Cargo
Damage to Aircraft: Substantial
Departure Point: Scone NSW
Departure Time: 1706 ESuT
Destination: Maitland ALA NSW

Crew Details:

Role	Class of Licence	Hours on	
		Type	Hours Total
Pilot-In-Command	ATPL	300.0	1900

Approved for Release: Monday, July 6, 1998

The pilot was conducting a scheduled freight run and earlier that day had refuelled the aircraft and departed Bankstown with full main tanks (401 litres) and 160 litres in the auxiliary tanks. The accident flight was on the Scone to Maitland sector, and the pilot reported that when departing Scone, the aircraft had about 108 kilograms of freight and 430 litres of fuel .

The pilot reported that while on descent and at about five miles from Maitland, the right engine RPM began to fluctuate with an accompanied increase in vibration. The pilot, thinking that it was a malfunction of the propeller governor, reported that he shut down the right engine and selected the right propeller to feather.

The pilot observed that the right propeller was still windmilling, the indicated airspeed was decreasing and that the aircraft was unable to maintain height, so he elected to land in a nearby field. He closed the left throttle and selected the landing gear down. The landing gear collapsed on touchdown as there had been insufficient time for it to extend and lock. The aircraft slid for about 120 metres.

Investigation of the fuel system indicated that the auxiliary tanks were empty while the main tanks each contained about 140 litres. The cockpit fuel selectors indicated that the main fuel tanks were selected.

Investigation of the engines and their systems, including the propellers and governors, could not determine the reason for the reported propeller malfunction or the inability of the aircraft to maintain height.

