Aviation Safety Investigation Report 199602882

Short Bros Pty Ltd SD360

10 September 1996

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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.

The Bureau did not conduct an on scene investigation of this occurrence. The information presented below was obtained from information supplied to the Bureau.

Occurrence Number:	199602882	Occurrence Type:	Incident			
Location:	Cairns, Aerodrome					
State:	QLD	Inv Category:	4			
Date:	Tuesday 10 September 1996					
Time:	1050 hours	Time Zone	EST			
Highest Injury Level:	None					
Aircraft Manufacturer: Short Bros Pty Ltd						
Aircraft Model:	SD360					
Aircraft Registration:	VH-MVX			Serial Number: SH3620		
Type of Operation:	Air Transport Domestic I	Low Capacity Passer	nger Scheduled			
Damage to Aircraft:	Nil					
Departure Point:	Cairns QLD					
Departure Time:	1050 EST					
Destination:	Townsville QLD					

Crew Details:

	Hours on		
Role	Class of Licence	Туре	Hours Total
Co-Pilot/1st Officer	ATPL	250.0	3200
Pilot-In-Command	ATPL	2800.0	7200

Approved for Release: Monday, September 30, 1996

The pilot of VH-MVX was given a departure instruction to turn left onto a heading of 030 degrees and to maintain 2,000 ft. The departure was being made from runway 15. The pilot had planned to cruise at 9,000 ft. The restriction to 2,000 ft was due to an inbound jet on the 153 radial which had been assigned 3,000 ft, and had been programmed for a left circuit for runway 15.

VH-MVX was cleared for takeoff, and before the pilot contacted the departures frequency, the departures controller advised the tower that the jet would be now tracking for a right circuit. After sighting the inbound jet, the tower controller volunteered to separate the two aircraft.

On first contact with the departures controller, the pilot of VH-MVX reported on climb to 9,000 ft, the flight planned altitude. Since the separation problem had been resolved, the departures controller thought that the tower had cancelled the altitude restriction and he accepted the altitude without comment.

The pilot of VH-MVX subsequently reported maintaining 3,000 ft. There was no restriction by this stage and the pilot was cleared to climb to 9,000 ft.

For this sector, the captain was the pilot flying (PF), and the copilot was the pilot not flying (PNF). The clearance instructions and restrictions were correctly received, understood, and readback by the crew. The assigned altitude 2,000 was placed in the assigned altitude indicator. This is to remind the crew of the last assigned altitude. After takeoff, the PNF contacted departures in the normal manner. He reported climbing to the originally cleared and planned level of 9,000 ft. This incorrect level advice was not challenged by the approach controller. The PNF could not explain why he forgot the 2,000 ft restriction. The captain stated that he did not hear the copilot say 9,000, believing he said 2,000. The departure controller then requested the pilot accept amended tracking instructions. These were accepted, again without reference to the 2,000 ft restriction. Company Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) require the PNF to refer to the assigned altitude indicator when reading back altitude clearances issued by air traffic control. The captain stated that he was happy to comply with the amended tracking instructions, was well aware of the restriction to 2,000 and was intending to comply with this restriction as well. He then subsequently climbed through the restricted altitude.

Company SOP's require the PF to initiate altitude calls at 1,000 ft and 500 ft to go to assigned levels and for the PNF to respond. These calls were not made, nor challenged.

The occurrence was allowed to develop through the failure of air traffic control and the crew to maintain adequate situational awareness. The safety net failed when the crew failed to comply with SOP's, cockpit management was inadequate, and the copilots support role was also inadequate. Action has been taken by the company to improve crew performance, and a notice issued to all pilots instructing them to apply extra vigilance to their duties.