

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report  
199503504**

**Aerospatiale  
Squirrel  
Bell Helicopter Co  
Jetranger  
Sikorsky Aircraft  
S76**

**23 October 1995**

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](http://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:** 199503504                      **Occurrence Type:** Incident  
**Location:** Sydney, Aerodrome  
**State:** NSW                      **Inv Category:** 4  
**Date:** Monday 23 October 1995  
**Time:** 1833 hours                      **Time Zone** EST  
**Highest Injury Level:** None

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Aerospatiale  
**Aircraft Model:** AS.350B  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-AQR                      **Serial Number:** 1087  
**Type of Operation:** Charter      Passenger  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Nil  
**Departure Point:** Sydney NSW  
**Departure Time:** 1816 EST  
**Destination:** Sydney NSW

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Bell Helicopter Co  
**Aircraft Model:** 206B (II)  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-BIN                      **Serial Number:** 2019  
**Type of Operation:** Charter      Passenger  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Nil  
**Departure Point:** Sydney. NSW  
**Departure Time:** 1816 EST  
**Destination:** Sydney. NSW

**Aircraft Manufacturer:** Sikorsky Aircraft  
**Aircraft Model:** S-76A  
**Aircraft Registration:** VH-CPQ                      **Serial Number:** 760172  
**Type of Operation:** Non-commercial Business  
**Damage to Aircraft:** Nil  
**Departure Point:** Ellerston Station NSW  
**Departure Time:** 1740 EST  
**Destination:** Sydney NSW

**Approved for Release:** Monday, November 6, 1995

A Squirrel AS 350B helicopter, and a Jetranger 206B helicopter, were conducting scenic flights in the Sydney area on the afternoon of the occurrence. These flights usually passed over Middle Harbour but, because runway 25 was in use, they were cleared to track in company via the less familiar St Peters route. The Squirrel, being the faster of the two aircraft, flew in the lead.

Nearing the end of the flight, both aircraft were asked to hold for ten minutes at Rose Bay. Both pilots later said that they became concerned because it was almost at the end of daylight, and neither helicopter was certificated to undertake commercial night operations. After holding for about seven minutes the tower cleared both aircraft to track to Sydney Airport via St Peters, and requested the pilots to expedite their return.

Whilst tracking inbound, the Jetranger began to fall behind the lead helicopter. The pilot of the Jetranger did not advise the tower, nor the pilot of the Squirrel, that he had fallen behind. As he approached to cross runway 25, the pilot of the Jetranger observed a fixed wing aircraft on final for that runway, and slowed his helicopter because of wake turbulence concerns. The tower, on hearing the Squirrel report on the ground at Helipad H1 on the southern side of runway 25, assumed that the Jetranger was also about to land. At the same time a Sikorsky S-76A helicopter was inbound from the Harbour Bridge for Helipad H4, on the northern side of runway 25. A short time later the pilot of the Sikorsky reported that a Jetranger had passed in front of him from right to left, within a distance of about 150 ft, near Helipad H4.

All three pilots subsequently reported on the difficulties of sighting other aircraft against the city lights. Although the pilot of the Squirrel was aware of the proximity of the Sikorsky, the pilot of the Jetranger was not. Nor was the Sikorsky pilot aware of the proximity of the other two helicopters. The aerodrome controller did not see the Jetranger against the background of aircraft and city lights, and was consequently unaware of the potential traffic conflict.

