

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
199403555**

**Cessna Aircraft Company
Conquest
Piper Aircraft Corp
Cheyenne III**

23 November 1994

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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:	199403555	Occurrence Type:	Incident
Location:	56km SW Meekatharra		
State:	WA	Inv Category:	4
Date:	Wednesday 23 November 1994		
Time:	0820 hours	Time Zone	WST
Highest Injury Level:	None		

Aircraft Manufacturer: Piper Aircraft Corp
Aircraft Model: PA-42
Aircraft Registration: VH-NMA **Serial Number:** 42-8001066
Type of Operation: Charter Passenger
Damage to Aircraft: Nil
Departure Point: Perth WA
Departure Time: 0709 WST
Destination: Meekatharra WA

Aircraft Manufacturer: Cessna Aircraft Company
Aircraft Model: 441
Aircraft Registration: VH-FMQ **Serial Number:** 441-109
Type of Operation: Charter Passenger
Damage to Aircraft: Nil
Departure Point: Yardy WA
Departure Time: 0800 WST
Destination: Perth WA

Approved for Release: Wednesday, February 1, 1995

VH-NMA was en route from Perth to Meekatharra at 27,000 feet (FL270) and had passed position Mount Magnet at time 0810 and was estimating Meekatharra at 0831.

VH-FMQ departed Readys for Perth at time 0801 and was estimating Mount Magnet at 0819, and had planned at FL260.

In addition VH-LBX was en route between Peakhill Mine and Perth. This aircraft had planned via Meekatharra (estimate 0825) and Mount Magnet (estimate 0848). VH-LBX was issued with a requirement to Reach FL240 by Meekatharra to facilitate separation with the other traffic.

At time 0813.5 a clearance was issued to the pilot of VH-FMQ to transit via planned route, to climb to FL220, and to expect higher levels at Mount Magnet.

At time 0816 an instruction was passed to the pilot of VH-NMA to leave control area on descent with a requirement to reach FL230 by time 0820. This was done to ensure separation with VH-LBX.

The pilot of VH-NMA queried the requirement and was told it was due to traffic. VH-NMA then commenced descent.

At time 0819.5, the pilot of VH-NMA reported leaving FL230 and requested the traffic.

The Perth Sector 4 Controller advised the pilot of VH-NMA that he could expect a short delay at FL230. The pilot queried this, stating he had just left FL220. The Sector 4 Controller then told the pilot of VH-NMA to report leaving FL210.

At time 0821, the pilot of VH-FMQ reported passing over Mount Magnet at time 0819, maintaining FL220.

The aircraft were now established on opposite sides of a Navaid and adequately separated.

The Sector 4 Controller had predetermined how to separate the aircraft involved, but gave the pilot of VH-NMA an instruction to leave control area on descent, instead of limiting descent to FL230 to remain separated from VH-FMQ.

Prior to issuing the descent clearance, the Controller did not advise the pilot of VH-NMA of the plan to enable him to descend into Meekatharra without experiencing extensive delays. Had this been done it is likely the pilot of VH-NMA would have realised the error when he was given descent below FL230.

VH-FMQ passed over Mount Magnet at time 0819 which was the time that NMA reported leaving FL230, so although separation existed, the Controller was unaware of the fact.

The Controller was experienced and, at the time was also performing Team Leader duties.

A review of the flight strips indicated that no times of passing between the aircraft were recorded on the flight progress strips and other details missing indicated that the Controller was not performing at the required technical level at the time.

The traffic levels in Sector 4 when it is busy, particularly in the vicinity of Mount Magnet, may warrant a separate flight progress board bay designator for Mount Magnet. This would make it much easier to visualise conflicts than the current method where the Mount Magnet position is located adjacent to the Mount Singleton designator.

Safety Action

The Civil Aviation Authority are reviewing the possible use of a Mount Magnet designator on the flight progress board.
