



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SUMMARY REPORT

Publication of this report is authorised by the Secretary under the provisions of Air Navigation Regulations 283 (1)

Reference No

SI/801/1041

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

'Wiamea' 20 km northeast of Goondiwindi, Qld.	Height a.m.s.l. 1300 feet	Date 8.8.80	Time (Local) 1628 hours	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Hiller UH 12E	Registration VH-FBR	Certificate of Airworthiness Valid from 17.10.79
Certificate of Registration issued to	Operator	Degree of damage to aircraft Destroyed
		Other property damaged Power line
Defects discovered Nil		

3. THE FLIGHT

Last or intended departure point 'Araluan'	Time of departure 1615 hours	Next point of intended landing 'Araluan'	Purpose of flight Kangaroo Shooting	Class of operation Aerial Work
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4. THE CREW

Name	Status	Age	Class of licence	Hours on type	Total hours	Degree of injury
	Pilot	37	Commercial Helicopter	322	4885	Fatal

5. OTHER PERSONS (All passengers and persons injured on ground)

Name	Status	Degree of injury	Name	Status	Degree of injury
	Observer	Fatal		Shooter	Fatal

6. RELEVANT EVENTS

The pilot was the holder of a letter of approval, authorising him to conduct animal culling operations. He was experienced in this type of operation and had flown in the Goondiwindi area for several days prior to the accident. For the culling operation the helicopter was flown with the doors removed. The pilot sat in the centre of the bench seat and both flew the helicopter and watched for targets. A shooter sat on one side of him and an observer on the other, to assist with spotting the animals. A number of persons shared the duties of shooter and observer. The terrain over which the operation was being conducted was generally flat and open scrub land. A number of power lines crossed the area but these were fairly easily discernible and the pilot had previously operated at a height sufficient to clear the lines.

Flying had commenced at about 0845 hours and continued throughout the day, with short intervals for refuelling and two longer periods for refreshments. At approximately 1615 hours the helicopter departed on the final flight for the day. The weather was fine and clear and the surface wind was calm. The sun was in the northwest, some 12 degrees above the horizon. There were apparently no visual witnesses to the final stages of the flight but persons on the ground, some 800 metres from the accident site believed the operation proceeded normally, with numerous gunshots being heard, prior to cessation of engine noise and the sound of impact.

Whilst in low-level flight, on a northwesterly heading, the helicopter had struck a 7.6 metres high power line. The wire had not initially broken but had caught on the helicopter, at the level of the cabin floor. After the collision the helicopter had continued in forward flight for 129 metres, before the restraining effect of the wire caused it to become inverted and strike the ground. The power line broke during this impact. Examination of the wreckage found no evidence of pre-existing malfunction or defect. A dead kangaroo was found near the point where the helicopter had struck the power line. In this location it could have caused a distraction to the pilot's attention as the helicopter was approaching the power line.

7. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The probable cause of the accident was that the pilot did not maintain the necessary high degree of vigilance required in low-level operations. Possible contributory factors were pilot fatigue and reduced visibility due to sunglare.

Approved for
publication(G. V. Hughes)
Delegate of the SecretaryDate
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