



Australian Government
Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Our Reference: B2006/0359
Contact: Owen Randall

Senator the Hon Bill Heffernan
Chair
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional
Affairs and Transport
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Subject: **Hansard corrections**
Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Dear Senator Heffernan

I write regarding my statements at the recent Senate Estimates Hearings on additional estimates for the Transport and Regional Services Portfolio on 15 February 2007. At the time of the hearing, incorrect information was unintentionally given on some details of general aviation accident investigations involving fatalities.

Incorrect information

- 1) 15/02/07, P.40, line 7. We have an Auster which flew into powerlines at Nelson on Christmas Eve.
- 2) 15/02/07, P.40, line 19.the one near Cootamundra was the fire operations
- 3) 15/02/07, P.40, line 31. ...Another seems to have had some sort of loss of control. Two of them were loss of control but, again, the circumstances were quite different in terms of what they were carrying and what they were doing at the time.

The requested correct information

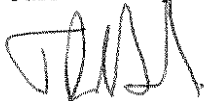
- 1) 15/02/07, P.40, line 7. There is a Cessna 172 at Mt Vernon Station in Western Australia and an Auster which flew into powerlines at Nelson on Christmas Eve.
- 2) 15/02/07, P.40, line 19.the one at Wynella Station that was conducting agricultural operations.
- 3) 15/02/07, P.40, line 31. ...Another also impacted the ground at night during agricultural operations, but the impact angle was greater and the investigation has identified potential medical issues. The other seems to have had some sort of loss of control.

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I would appreciate it if the corrections could be placed on the record relating to the Senate additional estimates hearing for the Transport and Regional Services Portfolio for 15 February 2007.

I apologise for any inconvenience that the incorrect information may have caused.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Walsh', written in a cursive style.

Julian Walsh
Deputy Director
Aviation Safety Investigation
Australian Transport Safety Bureau

16 February 2007

the inflight break-up. We have the Willowbank parachuting accident that Mr Bills mentioned. We have a Beechcraft Baron near McArthur River mine up in the Northern Territory. We have the Bell 206 helicopter conducting powerline surveys near Parkes. We have a Dromader conducting fire-suppressing operations near Cootamundra. We have a Robinson 44 helicopter at Gunpowder that was on a charter flight. There is the Lancair 360 at Bankstown that Mr Bills mentioned. There is the Beech Bonanza on Bathurst Island which was a private business flight. We have the Strikemaster near Bathurst that we have just discussed. We have a Chieftain at Raglan near Gladstone late last year. We have an Auster which flew into powerlines at Nelson on Christmas Eve.

Senator O'BRIEN—Where is Nelson?

Mr Walsh—About 30 kilometres south-east of Mount Gambier on the Victorian side of the border. The most recent one is the Twin Comanche that crashed near Kingscliff last year. There is the other Lancair in Brisbane that Mr Bills talked about. There is the Air Tractor near Collarenebri back in December last year as well.

Senator O'BRIEN—What is the report of this Air Tractor? Three out of the 18 incidents involved Air Tractors.

Mr Walsh—That sounds right.

Senator O'BRIEN—We know of Ballidu and Collarenebri.

Mr Walsh—That is right. The one in Ballidu was the one that was doing flying training, the one at Collarenebri was doing night spraying of the cotton fields and the one near Cootamundra was the fire operations.

Senator O'BRIEN—Has that aircraft had a history of problems, or is it used in close proximity to land because of its operations making it a riskier operation?

Mr Walsh—I think the nature of the operation is probably one that is of a higher risk. I think importantly at the moment there is nothing there that is actually linking these three accidents in relation to any similar causal factors. They seem to be quite separate.

Senator O'BRIEN—Pilot rather than aircraft factors?

Mr Walsh—We are still trying to make sure that we have looked at all of those issues. At the moment, the human factor side of things seems to be the more likely issue. All of them are slightly different human factor issues as well. So the mode of operation and the type of accident is quite different. One has virtually flown into the ground, apparently almost in a controlled flight, bearing in mind that it was a night-spraying operation on a dark night. Another seems to have had some sort of loss of control. Two of them were loss of control but, again, the circumstances were quite different in terms of what they were carrying and what they were doing at the time.

Senator O'BRIEN—Thank you for that. With the TransAir matter, can you let us know what the timetable is for the release of your final report, which I understand is in the consultation process?

Mr Bills—Yes, we have released our draft report, as the secretary mentioned this morning, to directly involved parties on 15 December and they have 60 days to comment. The time for submissions to be in is close of business today and we have had a couple come in. We have had another promised this afternoon and we are hopeful that the other couple will also come in today. It really depends on the extent of the comments not just in volume terms but also in terms of whether they require additional investigation of matters that we have not already considered as to how long it will take to us finalise the report. So we are hopeful to get the report out by the end of March, but until we read the comments from the ones we have not seen yet we cannot give you a better estimation of that.

Senator O'BRIEN—ATSB, as I recall it, referred some matters in relation to TransAir to the Director of Public Prosecutions. What has occurred there?

Mr Bills—We have been in discussion with the DPP's Brisbane office as to what can be done about these apparent breaches. Basically, the circumstance was that we, in the course of our TransAir investigation in the second half of last year, got a large amount of information. As that was analysed we found that there were a number of incidents that we believe should have been reported to us under the act and regulations that we had not heard about. So that was the basis to refer it to the DPP. I think there were about 25 of those. Seven of those were more serious, immediately reportable matters. They were not related to the accident itself but, as