

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE  
Additional Budget Estimates February 2010  
**Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government**

**Question No.:** ATSB 01

**Division/Agency:** Australian Transport Safety Bureau

**Topic:** Diversion of United Airlines Flight 829 to Brisbane – 16 January 2010

**Hansard Page/s:** 144 (09/02/10)

**Senator Nash asked:**

**Senator NASH**—What actually was the engineering problem?

**Mr Dolan**—It was a minor engineering problem. I would have to take it on notice for the details. It is one that was looked at comparatively quickly because it was minor. The aircraft originally, as I recall, was diverted to Brisbane for fuel related reasons because of headwinds and various things. It had no adequately safe guarantee of reaching Sydney and so landed in Brisbane. It was on the ground in Brisbane that the minor mechanical problem was found.

**Answer:**

During a post-flight inspection of the aircraft following the diversion to Brisbane, engineers discovered minor damage to three turbine blades on the Number 4 engine. It is not possible to determine when or how the damage occurred, but it did not have any adverse impact on the operation or safety of the aircraft during the flight. There is nothing to suggest any link between the blade damage and the fuel issue. High-level winds on long trans-Pacific flights can, at times, require crews to make operational decisions to divert to ensure aircraft land with appropriate fuel reserves. Such diversions for operational reasons are not transport safety matters that would be expected to be reported to the ATSB.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question No.:** ATSB 02

**Division/Agency:** Australian Transport Safety Bureau

**Topic:** Diversion of United Airlines Flight 829 to Brisbane – 16 January 2010

**Hansard Page/s:** 144 (09/02/10)

**Senator Nash asked:**

**Senator NASH**—Was it something that was likely to be an issue—I mean, obviously if it has been diverted for fuel reasons and then the problem is found. Is that unusual? Wasn't it something that had any kind of airborne trigger mechanism or—

**Mr Dolan**—I think I will have to get greater details of this to you on notice, if you do not mind.

**Answer:**

Please see answer to ATSB 01.

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**  
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**Question No.:** ATSB 03

**Division/Agency:** Australian Transport Safety Bureau  
**Topic:** ATSB Investigation and Classification Guidelines  
**Hansard Page/s:** 145 (09/02/10)

**Senator Nash asked:**

**Senator NASH**—Out of all of those thousands of reports, how many are, on a yearly average, investigated?

**Mr Dolan**—Eighty.

**Senator NASH**—Sorry; it is just a very small figure with the amount that come through.

**Mr Dolan**—We have—we would be happy to provide it if it were of benefit to the committee—a policy framework for assessing which are the most serious and therefore which would most benefit from a close look to see whether there are safety lessons to be learned and passed on more broadly to the industry. But it goes to the potential seriousness of the incident that was reported. There is another thing which I suppose shows how we keep these sorts of matters under review. We are conscious that, whatever the number is, it is always going to have some level of discomfort that we may miss something. What we have added as an additional string to our bow is a new level of investigation, which is to take an occurrence that would not merit sending out a team to look at all the details and go to the thoroughgoing one but to actually work with the reporting organisation to find more details and do a very short one-page report that means that over time we are getting visibility of more of them. So, in terms of where you perhaps feel a little uneasy, that is our response to that.

**Senator NASH**—No, I am getting more and more comforted by the minute. Sorry; it is very late. It is a very good contribution. Thank you. You did offer, I think, just then to provide the criteria that you use around that to the committee.

**Mr Dolan**—Yes.

**Senator NASH**—That would be quite useful.

**Answer:**

Please find attached the current version of the ATSB investigation decision and classification guidelines, extracted from the *ATSB Safety Investigation Guidelines Manual –Notification and Assessment*. These guidelines are currently under review and will be made publically available in accordance with the ATSB's Statement of Intent.

**ATSB 03 – Attachment A**