

**Aviation Safety Investigation Report
198900005**

Piper PA60

2 April 1989

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Investigations commenced on or before 30 June 2003, including the publication of reports as a result of those investigations, are authorised by the CEO of the Bureau in accordance with Part 2A of the Air Navigation Act 1920.

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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.

This accident was not subject to an on scene investigation.

Occurrence Number: 198900005 **Occurrence Type:** Accident
Location: Approximately 4.5 km NE Bass Point, Wollongong NSW
Date: 2 April 1989 **Time:** Approx. 1030
Highest Injury Level: Fatal
Injuries:

	Fatal	Serious	Minor	None
Crew	1	0	0	0
Ground	0	0	0	-
Passenger	0	0	0	0
Total	1	0	0	0

Aircraft Details: Piper PA60
Registration: VH-NOE
Serial Number: 61-0849-8162154
Operation Type: Charter
Damage Level: Destroyed
Departure Point: Sydney NSW
Departure Time: 1012
Destination: Wollongong NSW

Approved for Release: 4th July 1989

Circumstances:

The pilot was to conduct a charter with passengers from Sydney to Wollongong, Nowra, Canberra and return to Sydney, departing Sydney at about 10.00am. Earlier that morning he positioned the aircraft at Sydney and had it refuelled. When the passengers arrived he explained that the weather in the various destinations was very poor and that there was a possibility they may not be able to land. However, he was prepared to give it a try. As the passengers were pressed for time, they could not afford to take a chance with the weather and so they decided to drive. They told the pilot that if he could land at Wollongong later that day they would continue the flight with him. However, they impressed on him that there was no pressure for him to depart immediately as they would not be in Wollongong for several hours. After driving for a short time, the passengers decided that the weather did not appear as if it would improve, and believed that it would be better to complete the journey by car. They contacted the charter company by phone to cancel the charter, but the pilot had already departed. The flight to Wollongong appears to have proceeded normally where the pilot reported commencing an NDB approach, and would call again at a specified time. This was the last message received from the pilot. Witnesses on the ground at Wollongong, and on a yacht 20 nautical miles to the east of Wollongong reported hearing an aircraft flying at approximately 1000 to 2000 feet in the low cloud and rain. There were no other known aircraft in the area. Later that day a helicopter discovered wreckage debris in the sea, which was confirmed as being from the aircraft. The search was discontinued due to very poor weather and visibility, and cancelled two weeks later when further efforts failed to locate any trace of the aircraft.

Significant Factors:

The following factor was considered relevant to the development of the accident

1. The reason why the aircraft flew into the sea could not be determined.