

## 1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

5 miles north of Camden, New South Wales	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 275 feet	Date 15.10.72	Time (Local) 0930	Zone EST
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## 2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 182	Registration VH-CDI
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## 3. CONCLUSIONS

At about 0930 hours EST on 15 October, 1972, a parachutist was drowned in a dam following a static line parachute descent.

(ii) The student parachutist, Denise Gail O'Dea, was making her third jump, her first jump on this day. She was under the supervision of the Airborne Parachuting Centre which had conducted her training during the preceding four weeks.

(iii) Her initial training and the two previous jumps had been carried out under the supervision of Paul Raymond Etherton, an instructor, who also conducted the pre-jump training before this jump. The training included instruction in the techniques of aircraft exits, canopy control, landings and emergency procedures.

(iv) The parachutist was equipped with a 35 foot diameter main parachute and a 24 foot diameter reserve parachute. For this descent, the main parachute was to be operated by means of a static line and the reserve was equipped with a hand operated ripcord. No defect was discovered in either parachute, the harness, or any of the release mechanisms, which might have contributed to the accident.

(v) Two rear panels of the main parachute had been modified to provide "L" shaped slot apertures. These apertures give the parachutist a forward speed of 4 to 5 knots during the descent and by manipulating steering lines controlling the apertures the parachutist may make turns in either direction.

(vi) The Dropping Zone was free from significant obstacles in accordance with Air Navigation Order 29.1.6(b). There was no cloud in the area below the dropping height and the surface wind was from the east at a speed of about 5 knots. A post analysis of the meteorological synoptic situation indicated that there were light and variable winds ahead of a sharp wind change which moved into the area about the time of descent. There was probably some wind sheer between 2000 and 3000 feet and well developed thermal activity. Until the wind change was well established the wind velocity and the thermal activity was variable and transient.

(vii) The descent on which the accident occurred was made from a Cessna 182 aircraft registered VH-CDI, owned by A.W. Case and flown by Robert William Sheehan, the holder of a private pilot licence. Also on board the aircraft was the jumpmaster, Paul Raymond Etherton and another parachutist, Steve Opray.

(viii) At a height of about 2000 feet above the Dropping Zone, a drifter was dropped from the aircraft and this was used to assess the wind velocity. The aircraft then climbed, circled and overflowed the Dropping Zone again into wind at about 2500 feet. After an allowance had been made for the wind, the student exited the aircraft cleanly and her main parachute canopy deployed normally.

(ix) The Dropping Zone Safety Officer observed the descending student and, by means of flag signals, passed relevant instructions to her. The parachutist turned and drifted in several different directions and, at one stage, her descent was temporarily halted apparently as a result of thermal activity.

**CONCLUSIONS** (Cont'd)

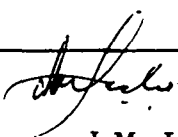
(x) In the latter stages of the descent, and after being instructed accordingly, she corrected a drift towards trees and, as she passed out of sight behind a tree covered slope, her descent was steady and normal with a westerly drift.

(xi) When it became apparent that the student was about to land some distance from the Dropping Zone another parachutist proceeded to the landing area to provide assistance and found that she had descended into a small dam of irregular shape approximately 600 square yards in area and some 6 feet deep at the point of entry. The dam was situated some 1,330 yards west-south-west of the Dropping Zone marker. The parachute harness was found to be still firmly attached to the parachutist and she was tangled in the rigging lines.

(xii) During the time that the student parachutist was descending, the aircraft climbed to a height of about 3,700 feet above the Dropping Zone and the two parachutists still on board exited. They made free falls to a height of some 2,500 feet when they deployed their parachutes and made normal descents. When the jumpmaster landed he observed that the student had not yet reached the ground.

**4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE**

The probable cause of the accident was that the parachutist, who was inexperienced, encountered unusual meteorological conditions and was unable to ensure that her descent was confined to the Dropping Zone.

Release approved  I. M. LESLIE	Designation Acting Assistant Director-General (Air Safety Investigation)	Date 9.7.1973
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