

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
SUMMARY REPORT

Reference No.
AS/712/1053

1. LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE

Four miles north east of Camden, New South Wales.	Height a.m.s.l. (ft) 230 feet	Date 15.8.71	Time (Local) 1433	Zone EST
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2. THE AIRCRAFT

Make and Model Cessna 172B	Registration VH-KFG
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3. CONCLUSIONS

At approximately 1433 hours EST on 15 August, 1971, a parachutist was fatally injured by impact with the ground following a static line descent near Camden, New South Wales.

(ii) The parachutist, Paull Wayne Gibbs, was making his eighth parachute descent. Earlier in the day he had successfully completed a static line jump using a parachute which was the property of the New South Wales Parachute Club. All his parachute jump training had been conducted by the New South Wales Parachute Club.

(iii) The parachutist was equipped with a 28 foot diameter back mounted main parachute and a 26 foot diameter chest mounted reserve parachute.

(iv) The main parachute, operated on this descent by means of a static line, was owned by Paull Wayne Gibbs and packed by Ronald Charles Tonkin. The main parachute was not equipped with steering toggle stowage bands or a flap to cover the stowed rigging lines. No evidence was found of any error or omission in packing or defect in the parachute which may have contributed to the accident.

(v) The reserve parachute, of a type which is operated by means of a rip cord, was owned and packed by Frank Holowzak. For the jump on which the accident occurred the operating handle was fitted in the centre pull position, a location which had not been used by the parachutist on any of his previous descents. The operating handle was restrained by one of the flap opening bungee straps which passed through it. The location of the handle and the method of restraint would not have prevented the parachutist from operating the reserve parachute, but a much greater pull force than normal would have been required. No evidence was found of any error or omission in packing, or defect in the parachute, which may have contributed to the accident.

(vi) The characteristics of the drop zone and the meteorological conditions prevailing were not factors in the accident.

(vii) The descent on which the accident occurred was from a Cessna 172B aircraft, registered VH-KFG, owned by W.D. Cleary and flown by Robert Dowling, the holder of a Commercial pilot licence. Also on board the aircraft were parachutists Robert Lawrence Costello, Paull Wayne Gibbs and the jumpmaster, Frank Holowzak.

(viii) The aircraft departed from Camden Aerodrome and at a height of about 2,200 feet, Robert Lawrence Costello exited the aircraft. After the aircraft circled Paull Wayne Gibbs also jumped from a height of about 2,200 feet and after exiting the aircraft cleanly he executed a dummy rip cord pull. As a result of static line release the pilot chute deployed and the bag was drawn from the pack, but after partial extension of the rigging lines the deployment sequence ceased. With the main parachute still contained within the bag the parachutist was seen to grasp the risers and manipulate them, as if attempting to clear the malfunction. He was not observed to make any attempt to operate his reserve parachute before he impacted the ground.

(ix) When the parachutist's equipment was subsequently inspected the main parachute, except for a small portion, was still contained in its bag and the reserve parachute ripcord had not been operated. One of the steering toggles was found entangled with the rigging lines but it was not evident that this entanglement in itself would have prevented deployment of the parachute. The precise

CONCLUSIONS (Cont'd)

reason why the main parachute failed to deploy could not be determined.

4. OPINION AS TO CAUSE

The cause of the accident was that, following a malfunction of the main parachute, the parachutist failed to deploy his reserve parachute.

Release approved

 (D.S. GRAHAM)

Designation

Assistant Director-General
(Air Safety Investigation)

Date

30.6.72