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MEDIA RELEASE

RELEASE OF FINAL REPORT INTO RAMU AGRI INDUSTRIES LTD CESSNA T188C AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) today published the Final Report for an accident investigation, *AIC 25-1002*.

On 23 April 2025, at 08:30 local (22:30 UTC), a Cessna T188C aircraft, registered VH-SOY, was conducting VFR low-level agricultural operations at the Ramu sugar fields when it impacted the ground at Sangkiang Village in the Usino Bundi District, Madang Province, Papua New Guinea.

The aircraft was owned by JANLIT Pty Ltd of Tully, Queensland. Liddles Aerial Spraying Pty Ltd (LASPL) of Innisfail Queensland operated the aircraft in Australia and contracted (hired) the aircraft and pilot to Ramu Agri Industries Ltd (RAIL) in PNG. RAIL was the PNG Operator of VH-SOY.

The pilot was the sole occupant of the aircraft and was fatally injured.

The AIC was notified on the day of the accident and immediately commenced an investigation into the occurrence pursuant to Section 247 of the PNG Civil Aviation Act 2000, and a team of investigators was dispatched to the site the next day to carry out the on-site investigation activities.

The investigation found that the pilot was scheduled to complete five crop spraying sorties over the RAIL sugar cane plantation on the day of the accident. The pilot successfully completed two spraying sorties. During the third spraying sortie to the northwest of Gusap Airstrip, the aircraft impacted the ground in the vicinity of Sangkiang Village, approximately 10 nm northwest of Gusap Airstrip.

The evidence available to the investigation was indicative of the pilot appearing to be attempting to conduct a forced landing on the Lae to Madang highway in response to an in-flight emergency. The reason for this action by the pilot could not be conclusively determined.

During the descending turn towards the highway the aircraft had insufficient height to maintain obstacle clearance and hit the tops of coconut trees before heavily impacting the ground.

The investigation considered two hypotheses.

1. That smoke in the cockpit initially emanated from the rear fuselage due to an electrical fault in the battery or associated electrical wiring and may have prompted the pilot to make an emergency forced landing.
2. That when the steel left landing gear leg was torn from its steel airframe mount sparks may have emanated igniting fuel from the fuel filter assembly that detached at the same impact time.

However, due to the destruction of the aircraft and its systems, there was insufficient evidence to conclusively support either hypothesis.

The AIC issued safety recommendations to both the operator (Ramu Agri Industries Limited) and Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG, aimed at improving operational safety. According to ICAO Annex 13 Standards, identified safety deficiencies and concerns must be raised with the persons or organisations best placed to take safety action. The Final report includes safety recommendations made by the AIC to the operator and CASA PNG.

The Final Report of the investigation is available on AIC's website www.aic.gov.pg

Authorised for release by:

Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner