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Our Ref: AIC 26-R01/25-1002

Safety recommendation: AIC 26-R01/25-1002

Addressed to: Ramu Agri Industries Limited

Date issued: 16 April 2026

Investigation link: AIC 25-1002

Action status: Issued

Introduction

On 23 April 2025, at 08:30 local (22:30 UTC¹), 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 Pty² Ltd² of Tully, Queensland. Liddles Aerial Spraying Pty Ltd 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. According to RAIL, at about 08:30, during the third round of crop spraying to the northwest, the aircraft impacted the ground at Sangkiang Village, located about 10 nm northwest of Gusap Airstrip. The aircraft was destroyed by impact forces and a post-impact fuel-fed fire.

As a result of the investigation into the accident, the PNG Accident Investigation Commission issued the following recommendations to address concerns identified in this report.

Safety deficiency description

The investigation determined that Ramu Agri Limited (RAIL) had changed the pilot assigned to the Gusap operation after the *Permit to Fly (PTF)* application was submitted. The original application, which included the nominated pilot's Licence and Medical documentation, had already been provided to CASA PNG for assessment prior to the change.

According to CASA PNG, the Australian pilot [named], CPL(A), was the individual presented in the application for *Permit To Fly No. 02/2024*, which authorised the foreign-registered aircraft VH-SOY to operate in Papua New Guinea for the period specified on the PTF.

¹ The 24-hour clock, in Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is used in this report to describe the local time as specific events occurred. Local time around the accident, Papua New Guinea Time (Pacific/Port Moresby Time) is UTC +10 hours

² Liddles Aerial Spraying operates a fleet of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters with bases in Mareeba, Tully and Innisfail in Queensland, Australia, providing aerial spraying services to the agricultural industry.

CASA PNG confirmed that it did not receive any formal notification from RAIL regarding the pilot change. CASA PNG further advised that, had such a notification been submitted, it would have triggered a review of the replacement pilot's licence and medical credentials to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. Any identified discrepancies could then have been addressed directly with the accountable organisation.

Recommendation AIC 26-R01/25-1002 to Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL)

Date Issued: 16 April 2026

The PNG Accident Investigation Commission recommends that Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL) should formally notify the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of PNG of any change in flight crew after a *Permit to Fly* is granted and ensure that pilot qualifications and experience are reviewed and approved prior to continuation of flight operations.

Action requested

The AIC requests that the Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL) note recommendation *AIC 26-R01/25-1002* and provide a response to the AIC within 90 days of the issue date but no later than 15 July 2026 and explain (including with evidence) how RAIL has addressed the safety deficiency identified in the safety recommendation.

STATUS: ISSUED.



Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner

16 April 2026

Ramu Agri Industries Limited (RAIL) response to Safety Recommendation AIC 26-R01/25-1002

On 20 July 2026, RAIL responded and provided evidence of implementation of safety action taken to address the safety deficiency identified during the investigation. RAIL advised that it had developed and implemented a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Operating the Crop Sprayer Aircraft in PNG, Version 1, issued on 14 July 2026, to address the identified safety deficiency. The SOP establishes a formal process requiring RAIL to apply to the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Papua New Guinea (CASA PNG) for an amendment to the Permit to Fly whenever there is a change or addition of a flight crew member. The SOP also requires that any pilot assigned to operate the aircraft meets specified minimum qualification and experience requirements, including holding a valid pilot license, current medical certificate, and a minimum of five years' experience operating the same or similar single-engine aircraft.

RAIL also provided correspondence with CASA PNG and documentation supporting the assessment and approval of an additional pilot before the amended Permit to Fly was issued and flight operations continued. The correspondence provided included a copy of the SOP together with documentation demonstrating that, prior to the SOP's publication, it had already followed this process by applying to CASA PNG to amend Permit to Fly No. PTF 01-2025 to include the additional pilot.

On 20 January 2026, RAIL formally contacted the Civil Aviation Safety Authority of Papua New Guinea (CASA PNG) to seek approval to include an additional pilot under the existing Permit to Fly. CASA PNG advised RAIL to submit an application to amend the permit using Form CA 21-07, together with the additional pilot's Australian flight crew licence, current medical certificate, and other relevant supporting documentation for regulatory assessment.

RAIL completed and submitted the application and supporting documents on the same day. Following its review, CASA PNG prepared a draft amended Permit to Fly incorporating the additional pilot and requested RAIL to review the proposed amendments before the permit was issued.

After RAIL confirmed that it had no comments, CASA PNG issued Revision 1 of the amended Permit to Fly on 22 January 2026 and subsequently issued Revision 2 on 23 January 2026.

Through this process, CASA PNG assessed and approved the additional pilot before the amended Permit to Fly was issued, ensuring that the change in flight crew was formally notified to the regulator and authorized prior to the continuation of flight operations.

The Permit to Fly (Revision 2, issued 23 January 2026) provided strong evidence that the recommendation had been addressed.

The amended Permit to Fly (Revision 2) incorporated Condition (f) to include the new pilot.

Condition (f): " The aircraft shall be operated only by the following pilots: (1) holder of CASA Australia Commercial Pilot License Number; and (2) holder of CASA Australia Commercial Pilot License Number They are aware of the purpose of the flight and any limitations imposed. Prior request and approval must be obtained from the Director, for the use of any other appropriately licensed pilot."

The evidence provided by RAIL demonstrates that:

- RAIL formally notified CASA PNG of the proposed change in flight crew.
- CASA PNG reviewed the replacement pilot's qualifications, experience, and supporting documentation before approving the amendment to the Permit to Fly.
- The revised Permit to Fly was issued before the replacement pilot conducted flight operations.
- RAIL has established a documented procedure requiring future flight crew changes to be notified to CASA PNG and approved before operations continue.

AIC assessment to Ramu Agri Industries Limited Response

The AIC has assessed the RAIL response to AIC Safety Recommendation *AIC 26-R01/25-1002* and notes that the corrective action taken has fully addressed the safety deficiency identified in the AIC investigation. The AIC has assigned a fully satisfactory rating.

The AIC has recorded the Status of the AIC Recommendation: **CLOSED RESPONSE ACCEPTED**



Maryanne J. Wal

Chief Commissioner

31 August 2026