

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **RELEASE OF FINAL REPORT INTO TROPICAIR LIMITED DHC-6-300 AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT AT TAPINI AIRSTRIp, CENTRAL PROVINCE, PNG**

The Papua New Guinea Accident Investigation Commission (AIC) today published the Final Report into the investigation of an accident involving a DHC-6-300 aircraft at Tapini Airstrip, Central Province, Papua New Guinea.

On 22 January 2026 at 09:33 local time (23:33 UTC), a de Havilland Canada DHC-6-300 aircraft, registered P2-BBM, owned and operated by Tropicair Ltd, was conducting an IFR charter return flight when it experienced a loss of directional control during its take-off roll on Runway 09, at Tapini Airstrip, Central Province. The aircraft subsequently veered to the left and impacted the perimeter fence adjacent to the left edge of the runway. The Nose Wheel and Lower Fork Assembly separated from the Nose Landing Gear (NLG) shock strut assembly after the aircraft became airborne. The aircraft continued to Port Moresby and subsequently conducted an emergency landing at Jacksons International Airport on Runway 32 Left without the Nose Wheel and the Lower Fork assembly.

There were twenty-one (21) persons on board the aircraft: Pilot in Command (PIC), co-pilot and nineteen (19) passengers. There were no reported injuries.

The investigation identified that the occurrence resulted from a combination of environmental, aerodrome, and human factors. The severely reduced runway surface friction resulting from heavy overnight rainfall, which left the grass runway surface at Tapini Airstrip wet, muddy, and slippery. Poor drainage at the airstrip contributed to water accumulation and deterioration of the runway surface condition, significantly reducing braking effectiveness, steering authority, and tyre traction during the take-off roll.

Contributing aerodrome factors included the approximately 4.5% downhill gradient and lateral slope of Runway 09, which increased the aircraft's tendency to slide on the contaminated surface and reduced the effectiveness of directional control inputs. The presence of overgrown vegetation and perimeter fencing adjacent to the runway also increased the likelihood and severity of damage during the runway excursion.

Contributing human factors included the control inputs applied by the pilot-in-command in response to the developing loss of directional control. As the aircraft was already skidding on a low-friction surface, the use of rudder, nose wheel steering (tiller), and asymmetric power increased the loading and structural stresses acting on the nose wheel assembly. These stresses contributed to the damage sustained by the assembly; however, the subsequent failure resulted from the combined effects of these stresses, entanglement with perimeter fencing wire, and overload during the runway excursion sequence.

The investigation also identified that limited runway condition information available prior to departure reduced the crew's ability to fully assess the operational suitability

of the airstrip under the prevailing wet-season conditions. The absence of a structured runway condition assessment, including surface condition and braking action reporting, increased the operational risk associated with conducting a take-off from the contaminated runway surface.

During the investigation, Tropicair Limited voluntarily implemented safety measures to improve the safety of operations into Tapini Airstrip, including completing a risk assessment of operations into Tapini Airstrip to identify and address hazards associated with operating at the airstrip, developed and delivered a weather observation and runway condition reporting training package for the Tapini Airstrip agent, Procured and installed a rain gauge at Tapini Airstrip to improve the accuracy of local weather observations, Reviewed and updated its Route Guide and operating procedures for operations into wet and sloping remote airstrips which includes Tapini and cleared the Tapini Airstrip drainage system and vegetation along the runway edges to improve surface drainage and reduce water accumulation.

In accordance with ICAO Annex 13 Standards and Recommended Practices, the purpose of the investigation was not to apportion blame or liability, but to identify safety issues and promote the prevention of future accidents and incidents.

The Final Report of the investigation is available on the AIC website [www.aic.gov.pg](http://www.aic.gov.pg).

*Authorised for release by:*

**Maryanne J. Wal**  
Chief Commissioner