

6 June 2002

Immediate Use

SEARCH FOR FIVE PEOPLE IN MISSING HELICOPTER

Australian Search and Rescue is coordinating a search for a helicopter carrying five people that failed to make a scheduled refuelling stop yesterday afternoon.

The helicopter was conducting survey work for a proposed pipeline west of the Mitchell Ranges 90 nautical miles (166 kms) south west of the Gove Peninsula in the Northern Territory. The Bell 206 Jetranger was due to refuel at 2pm (AEST) yesterday.

A search yesterday afternoon by two aircraft and overnight using a Customs Coastwatch Dash 8 surveillance aircraft equipped with a Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) camera failed to locate the helicopter.

Five fixed wing aircraft and three helicopters are searching a 700 square nautical mile (1100 square kilometre) region west of the Mitchell Ranges today.

The missing helicopter was well equipped with communications, first aid and safety gear. It was examining Aboriginal sacred sites.

The weather in the search area is good with light winds and minimal cloud.

Further information: Ben Mitchell 0418 164 901

