



MEDIA RELEASE

18 October 2003

Immediate Use

SEARCH FOR MISSING HELICOPTER FLIGHT CREW

Australian Search and Rescue is coordinating a search for two men from a helicopter that crashed into the sea off Mackay, Queensland last night.

The two men were part of a three-man flight crew on board a rescue helicopter flying from Mackay to Hamilton Island where they were to evacuate an injured person.

The helicopter crashed into the sea about 15 nautical miles (28 kilometres) North-North-West of Mackay.

Australian Search and Rescue was notified by the Queensland Ambulance Service at about 10.39 pm last night that the Bell 407 helicopter had failed to arrive at Hamilton Island.

A helicopter from Hamilton Island equipped with a powerful spotlight began a search for the missing aircraft and located the wreckage at about 11.10pm. A review of air traffic control radar tapes by Airservices Australia helped locate the crashed helicopter.

One of the men was found deceased at the crash site by a Volunteer Marine Rescue launch from Mackay at about 11.40pm.

When initially sighted, the crashed helicopter was floating in the water with the aid of emergency floats. It has since sunk and Queensland Police Divers will dive on the helicopter this morning.

A second helicopter from Townsville equipped with a Forward Looking Infra-Red Camera began searching for the missing men at about 2.15am while a fixed wing aircraft circled overhead to monitor distress beacon frequencies.

All those on board the crashed helicopter are understood to be men in their early 30s.

A search involving four helicopters and two fixed wing aircraft will commence this morning.

Further information:

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