Pilot finds Lowood paddock just in time

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NEAR THING: The pilot makes a few phone calls after he made an emergency landing in a paddock near the Patrick Estate Road yesterday. Sarah Harvey

UPDATE: A pilot and his passenger escaped a potentially deadly drama in the skies west of Ipswich yesterday, safely landing in a paddock after smoke filled the cabin.

Witnesses spotted the plane circling only just above the tree line over farm land near Lowood, less than a minute before it landed safely.

Only the pilot's quick thinking during a 20-minute flight prevented a catastrophe, as he performed a controlled landing 11km from the Coominya Flight Training airstrip they took off from.

The pilot, who did not want to be named, told the QT as smoke began to fill the cabin he estimated he had 30 seconds to land the single- engine plane before the situation deteriorated.

He said the smoke came from the plane's battery and he was conscious of landing before the smoke became too thick.

He landed the plane in a paddock off Patrick Estate Rd and taxied for 200m before coming to a stop.

He phoned the fire brigade and emergency services rushed to the scene.

"When you are coughing on smoke, there is nothing you can do," the pilot said.

The pilot of two years said making the quick decision to set the plane down was a testament to his training.

He called the fire brigade fearing the smoking plane might catch fire and set alight the field of long, dry grass they landed on.

Neighbours who could see the plane was in trouble flocked to the property to check on the pair.

Graeme Bell watched the plane circle above the farm in the minutes before the landing. He saw two men jump out of the cabin as soon as the plane came to a halt.

"When he was circling you could hear the pitch of the engine change," he said.

"He did a pretty normal landing. He hit the ground and taxied. Two people got out ... and watched the plane for a while and you could see some smoke coming out from the cabin."