

# Pilot praised for getting passengers out of plane before it sank in north Queensland dam

By Francis Tapim



**Photo:** Six people had to swim to safety after the light plane they were on crashed into a dam in north Queensland. (Audience submitted: Garry Poole)

A pilot has been praised for getting his passengers out of a plane before it sank in a north Queensland dam.

The single engine Piper Cherokee 6 crashed into a dam as it was coming in to land at Lakeside Airfield, about 40 kilometres south of Proserpine, on Sunday about 4:00pm.

All six people onboard got out safely and swam to shore. One person suffered a minor back injury.

Lakeside Airfield owner Garry Poole was at home nearby at the time when he heard "a loud roar of an engine and then a bang and a roar again."

"I thought 'oh, no, there's a problem there somewhere'," he told ABC News Breakfast.

"I quickly shot out of the house and I noticed the plane was settled right on the lake which was quite amazing it was sitting there.

"It hasn't started sinking. As soon as the exit doors were open it quickly started taking on water and it didn't take long for the plane to start going down.

"It was chaos there for a while."

Mr Poole said he spoke to the pilot once everyone was safe.

"He [the pilot] said that he experienced a down draft just prior to reaching the strip and it was quite obvious when he landed he had lost control of the plane and it went through quite a bit of fencing, hit an embankment and ended up in the lake," he said.

"I must say I think the pilot did an excellent job ... he was diving in and out of the plane making sure his passengers were out.

"We had six very lucky people. How on Earth they weren't killed I will never know."

Mr Poole also said he "had a real problem raising triple-0".

"I was sort of ringing other people saying this could be extremely serious, I couldn't believe the time that it took us to get through on that triple-0 number," he said.

### **'It sounds like a well executed ditching'**

Australian Federation of Air Pilots president David Booth said pilots were trained for these types of situations.

"It sounds as though [it was] a well executed ditching," Captain Booth said.

"The pilot sounds as though he has done a great job of safely landing the aircraft on the water and getting the passengers out."

Captain Booth said there would have been extreme panic when the plane hit the water, with everyone scrambling to get out of one door.

"The beauty of the Cherokee 6, if you are going to ditch anything it is probably a better aircraft to ditch because it has got a low wing and as a result it is probably going to float with the cabin above water for some moments to allow the passengers to exit," he said.

Extracted from:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-27/plane-crashes-and-sinks-in-queensland-dam-six-people-safe/6649412>

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