

# Pilot dies in light plane crash in Hunter Valley

[Melanie Kembrey](#)

A pilot has died in a ultralight plane crash just metres from a cafe where dozens of local residents were celebrating a birthday party in the Hunter Valley wine region.

The plane crashed into a woody paddock in Lovedale, off Lovedale Road, about midday on Saturday.

About 60 people were eating at The Lovedale Store and Cafe, roughly 10 metres away from the crash site, when they heard an "almighty bang".

Cafe owner Jane Brazier it sounded like a "car crash" and she rushed out of the kitchen to see what had happened.

"Everybody got up from the tables and just stopped what they were doing. You couldn't see anything. It's all wooded area and there was no smoke or anything," Mrs Brazier said.

The patrons, many of whom were locals celebrating a 60th birthday, were alarmed but they thought a tree trunk must have fallen when they could see no sign of disruption.

It was only a short time later when one of the diners, a former pilot himself, was leaving the cafe and saw a glimpse of metal in the woods that the plane was found.

"They sort of looked into the wood area as they were driving past and this customer is an ex-pilot and he saw something that looked like orange metal or whatever so they decided to turn around and have a look and he went in and it was the microlight," she said.

Mrs Brazier's husband, Paul, rushed into the woods but said the male pilot was already dead and there was nothing he could do to help.

"The aircraft obviously fell out of the sky so fast we didn't actually know what it was. We all assumed it was a fallen tree. We knew there was metal, we heard metal, so we were a bit confused," Mr Brazier said.

"We're all pretty shocked. I've had a lot of phone calls."

People who knew the pilot said he was experienced but flying the ultralight aircraft for the first time, Mr Brazier said. The *Herald* has not been able to confirm this.

Police said the pilot was the only person on board and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Emergency services are still at the site and motorists have been told to avoid the area.

Local businesses owners and residents said scenic and pleasure flights were common in the area and there were also pilot training schools nearby. Cessnock Aerodrome and Maitland Airport are close to Lovedale.

Lovedale has a population of about 300 and Chamber of Commerce president Amanda Lambert said residents would be devastated by the news.

"It is a very close community and we always look out for each other," she said.

Extracted from:

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/pilot-dies-in-light-plane-crash-in-hunter-valley-20150523-gh81qw.html>

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